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Contents

[MARCH 1905

	PAGE
Hay Fever	385
By WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK and GUY C. POLLOCK Chapters VI., VII.	
Time and Tide	404
By L. JEBB	
The Jarl's Mercy	415
By G. W. MURRAY	
The Making of a Man. (In Two Parts.) Part I.	416
By Captain VAUGHAN	
A Port of Stranded Pride.	433
By E. HALLAM MOORHOUSE	
The Vagaries of Tod and Peter	440
By L. ALLEN HARKER	
Wild Wheat	455
By M. E. FRANCIS (Mrs. Francis Blundell) Chapters VI.-VIII.	
At the Sign of the Ship	472
By ANDREW LANG	

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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

MARCH 1905.

Hay Fever.

BY WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK AND GUY C. POLLOCK.

CHAPTER VI.

IT certainly will surprise no one to learn that, with a difference, the circumstances of Mr. Tempest's arrival at the unsuspecting portals of Professor Sapley's house closely resembled those of Mark Hawley's unforeseen descent upon Sir George Paston. Attentive servants (there had been a certain amount of mystery about the expected guest, but not a trace of knowledge of this appeared in their well-schooled voices and faces) received him with smooth alacrity, and took charge of what seemed to be his valise and minor encumbrances. The Butler (a personage so stately that Mr. Tempest at once thought of him as the Chief Butler) informed him that Professor Sapley was most particularly engaged for the moment. Here began the difference between the reception of the disguised Mr. Tempest and that of the undisguised Mark Hawley, which was part and parcel of the confusion generally found to attend on an interchange of personality, bodily or mental or both. And the difference was continued and marked by the Chief Butler further informing Mr. Tempest that Mrs. Sapley was in the rose-garden, which he pointed out from the steps, and would be very pleased to receive the expected guest during the Professor's temporary seclusion. Wherefore Mr. Tempest, rising to the situation, and looking more Anglo-Indian than life itself, walked with alert dignity towards the rose-garden, while the Chief Butler, retiring pompously to 'the room,' answered a fire of questions by such remarks as that the gent had given no name, and he, the Butler,

had not asked for none, such being his instructions, that the new arrival for his looks and ways was the moral of the Guvnor's second cousin from the Injies, and that he, the Butler, thought it what might be called a rummy start. Pressed by Mrs. Panyer, the housekeeper, to say if he saw in it any connection with all the to-do about some jewels missing from the last new mummy, and if the guest was a Protective, he replied darkly that he might have his own opinions on many subjects, but that one of them was that duty came first.

Our Anglo-Indian, getting more and more as he said to himself 'into the skin of the personage,' made his way to the rose-garden, where awaited him Mrs. Sapley with another, larger, more grandiose hat, and with a smile which was perhaps a little forced. For, to say the truth, there had been a lively discussion on the way down between the Professor and herself, which was the real reason for his not appearing to welcome the expected Mark Hawley. His nerves had been shattered, and he was giving them such time as he could to recover. She, on her side, for reasons best known to herself, felt that now, if ever, must her nerves be braced to the utmost, and she advanced to meet the distinguished-looking stranger with a smile indeed, but also with the determined look of her eyebrows more marked than usual.

The Anglo-Indian, on perceiving her, raised his hat with a delicate blending of civil and military courtesy which at once appealed to her sympathies, and she opened conversation by saying to him, 'You will have heard that the Professor is unavoidably immersed in business for the moment. But you must try to make the best of me as his deputy, Mr.—Hawley, is it not?'

'So,' said Mr. Tempest to himself, 'I'm that sawdust-stuffed idiot Mark Hawley, am I? Very well. I might have guessed it; but anyway, now I know where I am.' To Mrs. Sapley he replied: 'Madam, I am indeed honoured. In fact, as we say in the House—I mean in India—I mean, of course, at the Yard—pray forgive me, but the habit of speaking in an assumed character—'

'Oh!' broke in Mrs. Sapley, 'no apologies I beg. I quite understand,' she added with her most winning smile; 'when you are once turned into somebody else it must be so difficult to get back again, mustn't it?'

'Upon my word, madam,' returned Mr. Tempest energetically, 'you're as sharp as a needle. Not but what I always thought so.' He had spoken unthinkingly in his natural voice. Mrs. Sapley had started slightly both at the matter and at the manner of his

utterance, and he now hastened to repair the mistake as best he could. 'Another slip,' he continued blandly with his slight drawl of a moment before, 'and this time less excusable, for it was into quite another character. The fact is'—and here was indeed a daring stroke on his part—'I have been making a study for professional purposes of a certain eminent man of business—a stockbroker, indeed—and I fancy I dropped into something like his manner for a moment.'

'A stockbroker?' said Mrs. Sapley blushing. 'Ah! that might account, though to be sure it could hardly—but in short, Mr. Hawley, would it not be a rest for you, and save trouble generally, if you were to drop into your own character and stay in it as long as we are alone together? I feel sure,' she added with nods and becks, 'you could not better it by any assumption.'

'Not better it! Those words from you!' cried Mr. Tempest joyfully, and then, suddenly recollecting himself—'another lapse, but it shall be the last. Mark Hawley, henceforth, to you I am and will remain,' and with these words he gave an imitation, as good as he could at short notice, of the detective's most imposing air.

'Well,' said Mrs. Sapley admiringly, 'it will be more convenient, but what a wonderful mimic you must be! The manner to the life in those few words! It reminded me so vividly of——' here she paused and blushed.

'Of whom, madam?' inquired the other magisterially.

'Of a dear friend of mine,' replied Mrs. Sapley demurely.

'A dear friend,' said the stockbroker to himself—'that's good, that's *very* good'; and then to her, in a Hawleyish way, 'Concerning the matter on which my humble services have been requisitioned?'

'Ah!' said Mrs. Sapley falling into the simple trap, 'the disappearance of the jewels from the new mummy.'

'*Pre-cisely*,' answered Mr. Tempest, getting interested in the new part thrust upon him. 'You speak, I observe, of a disappearance, not of a theft—some mystery, here, perhaps,' he added to himself.

'Why should I speak of it as a theft?' asked Mrs. Sapley defiantly, and then repeated, almost appealingly, 'Why should I? Why?'

'Why, indeed?' echoed Mr. Tempest, clean forgetting his assumed character or characters under the influence of her siren tones, as they seemed to him. 'Why should you speak of anything or nothing that you don't entirely choose to speak of? Why

should not your path be one of roses—roses all the way?’ Seeing her completely astonished look, he went on at headlong pace: ‘Why should there be any mischief or mystery? Arabella Georgina, further concealment is useless, I am *that* Tempest!’ and with this, he struck a melodramatic attitude.

‘Oh! Mr. Tempest!’ exclaimed the lady, passing quickly from bewilderment to joy, ‘the very man! How clever of you! Now I shall be freed from all my entanglements and troubles!’ and with this she impulsively extended her hand, which he gallantly bent to kiss. ‘No wonder,’ she continued, ‘that I thought your imitation so good, though I am sure you could do it quite as well if you tried, but do tell me how in the very nick of time you happen to be here?’

‘That, dear lady—may I say dearest lady?—is just exactly what’—he was going to say *what I was about to ask you*, but dexterously substituted *what I will now explain to you*, and, with fluent imagination, if in disjointed and Jingle-like words, continued: ‘Suspected something wrong—the very thought of beauty in distress—fly to the rescue, or unworthy of the name of a British sailor, I mean stockbroker; and so here we, that is, here I am now, and always at your service!’ and with this he dropped alertly on one knee.

‘Oh, Mr. Tempest!’ exclaimed Mrs. Sapley again, ‘such thoughtfulness, such chivalry! But pray get up’; he did so. ‘I see it all. You feared the results of this Hawley’s interference, and forestalled him by taking his place. How noble of you! And how prompt in action!’

‘Action!’ repeated the stockbroker, and the word set him off into quite a different mood. ‘To be sure, that’s our cue now. Thinking all done. Did it myself in the train. Now to lay our plans. Whom have you in the house?’

‘Only the Professor,’ said Mrs. Sapley, meekly following his lead; ‘the others are out.’ She did not say, and he did not inquire, what others.

‘The Professor, true,’ he rejoined; ‘I must be introduced to him in the character of Hawley. But I meant, rather, what available force of able-bodied men for purposes of capture or—or otherwise?’ he concluded lamely but rapidly.

‘I really hardly know,’ said Mrs. Sapley.

‘Then,’ Mr. Tempest made answer, ‘let us go in and see.’

‘Stay,’ cried Mrs. Sapley (to say *stop* would have been beneath her), as a sudden look of nervousness came into her face, ‘here is

the Professor coming towards us. I will at once introduce you, as Mr. Hawley, to him, and then' (here wreathed smiles resumed their place) 'I shall leave you for the present to his tender mercies instead of mine. Only for the present.'

The introduction was swiftly made, and Mr. Tempest was duly handed over to the Professor with information as to the supposed Mr. Hawley's present intentions. Mrs. Sapley expressed a hope that the two gentlemen would soon return, and occupied herself in graceful garden cares.

As the stockbroker and the Egyptologist walked towards the house, Mr. Tempest's attention was attracted by one of the men about the place, merely because he had an odd whimsical look. 'What is that man's name?' he asked sharply of Sapley, who, peering at the man, replied: 'I think that is Goles.'

'Ah! a name of good omen,' said Mr. Tempest with much gravity. 'Let us take him with us.'

So said, so done; and the Professor, with the wool completely pulled over his eyes by the stockbroker's double disguise as Hawley in the character of an Anglo-Indian, entered the house accompanied by Tempest and followed by Goles.

As they went in, Mr. Tempest, looking about him and wide awake to the joy of the situation, felt all the delightful irresponsibility of a child, and, moreover, of a child who finds itself suddenly endowed with a seemingly unlimited command of playthings. Hand in hand with this feeling went a keen pleasure in the revival of his old histrionic triumphs and the sense of humour, though not of discretion, proper to his real experience and personality. Altogether, at this moment, Mr. Tempest offered in himself a complete solution of the problem how to be happy though alive.

No wonder, then, that he was singularly vivacious and active. Only one thing might have betrayed that he was not what he seemed—a purposeless and cat-like inquisitiveness; but this, luckily, was accepted as part of the detective instinct and method. Thus, as they passed through the hall, hung on either side with portraits which *might* have been by Lely (and if not by Lely, why then they were by somebody else), 'Ancestors?' said Mr. Tempest to Sapley with brisk inquiry. To which word the Professor, rather defiantly than defensively, replied: 'Ancestors, yes.' But there was an expression on his face which led the other to suppose he had said the wrong thing. Therefore, with an unhappy desire to make things better, he went on, still in a short, dry manner:

'Never know where a clue may lie hid. Pictures might, in case of educated criminals, cause disappointment, disappointment cause revenge; in other words, other robberies.' After, instead of before, he had said this he fell to thinking of the speech, and said to himself, 'Tickled him up too much, I'm afraid. He probably bought 'em and thought they were good. Must smooth him down again.'

In pursuance of this good resolution, as they passed a kind of lumber-room wherein, as the door was partly open, he discerned rows of Egyptian statuettes on shelves, the concealed stockbroker asked leave to enter, and on its being accorded, permitted himself to indulge in extravagant expressions of admiration.

'Now here,' he said, 'Professor, is what, perhaps, puts me on a more likely clue. I take it that your priceless collection, to which these things, perfect as they are, form but the merest and feeblest index, may be an object of envy to some Egyptologists?'

'Some?' said the Professor, whose eyes flamed with anger, pride, and contempt at the very thought. 'You may well say *some*.'

'And not all of them, I imagine, absolutely—what shall I say?—scrupulous?' asked Mr. Tempest.

'Scrupulous?' echoed the Professor, and in the word there was such a world of meaning that the other, with the instinct of a true artist, left the effect there and passed on to the end of the long hall. Here he found coats, hats, and suchlike gear hanging up, and, among other things, he noticed a dog-lead and a whistle. He laid a finger on these two objects, and looked inquiringly at Sapley.

'Mrs. Sapley,' said the Professor, 'for some little time kept a dog, but his barking disturbed my studies, and he was given away to a friend.'

At this speech all of the real Mr. Tempest that the Imp of the Perverse had left untouched said to itself, 'This man certainly is not worthy to belong to a dog,' while the rest of him, masquerading as the detective, said to Sapley, 'Pity that. A good yapping terrier might have saved all this trouble. The whistle may come in handy, though.' And so saying he took it off its peg and placed it in his pocket.

Just at this point a spirit of quiet satisfaction and contemplation began to take possession of Mr. Tempest, and it is impossible to conjecture to what this might have led had he not been recalled to activity by the Professor, who, after possessing his soul in patience for a minute or two while, as he thought, the detective was lost in anxious deliberation, at last could not refrain from breaking silence

with 'I beg pardon, but would you like to inspect the upstairs rooms, or to look at the mummy?'

Mr. Tempest started, and then replied with rapidity and decision as if he were a piece of clockwork suddenly wound up: 'Where was the mummy? Much may depend on that.'

'It was standing up,' said Sapley, 'just behind the spot you are now occupying. It has since been moved into the cupboard yonder. Would you like to see it?'

'Not at all,' said Mr. Tempest abruptly.

'Nor to look at the rooms upstairs?'

'Still less,' was the somewhat ungracious and unexpected reply.

Seeing the effect produced by his words, Mr. Tempest looked cunningly at the Professor, caught him by the lappel of his coat, drew him aside, and said in a mysterious undertone: 'You will pardon me, Professor, for my seeming rudeness. The fact is, all my plans may be disarranged, upset—what do I say?—ruined, if the slightest hint of the true manner in which I propose to go to work is dropped or divined by any outsider. To you, Professor, to a person of your great position and fine perception, it is most fitting that all should be made known in due time. But the moment has not yet arrived, and meanwhile, not one of your people must have the slightest inkling. Indeed, it is most desirable that you and I should not be noticed in confabulation together. Therefore, if you will permit me to say so—Mum's the word!'

Mr. Tempest again looked very cunning and smiled upon the thoroughly mystified but also thoroughly mollified Professor. 'That's understood then, and now—but what have we here?' he continued, as he caught his foot against some stout rope coiled up on the floor.

'That,' said the Professor pompously, 'is rope. It is generally kept in readiness for packing-purposes—cases, crates, and so on.'

'Ah! to be sure,' said Mr. Tempest meaningly, and motioned to Goles to pick up the coil. Goles looked inquiringly at the Professor, who frowned and indicated that the behest was to be obeyed, and then, 'Now to muster our forces,' said Mr. Tempest, as he slowly led the way to the hall-door again.

The Professor despatched Goles to bring all the men he could find available on to the lawn, where some five or six outdoor men and lads soon appeared, conducted by Goles, in the presence of Mrs. Sapley, whom Mr. Tempest and the Professor had now rejoined. She, good lady, was in a state of mingled delight, self-importance, and flutter, for, as the two came up the gallant gay stockbroker

had fallen a pace behind the Professor, and then, looking unutterable things at her, had laid his hand on his heart, and then raised his finger to his lips.

As the little posse of men stood gaping and waiting, Mr. Tempest drew himself up to his full and considerable height. 'Now,' he said in a tone of smart command, 'the thing is to scatter. Every avenue of approach must be watched. Every man his own watch-man.' He gave a loud cough to cover up this sudden lapse towards frivolity, and resumed more portentously, 'You,' to a gardener, 'in the corner there by the evergreens. 'You,' to a slim person, 'behind that Wellingtonia. You shall crouch beneath those shrubs.' One of much obesity to whom this was addressed looked vastly uncomfortable. 'You,' this to a specially mild-looking youth, 'armed with a stout stick by the side of that path where I think he is most likely to appear. The others will keep up a constant patrol in the background and on all-fours. Dear madam,' he said with a winning smile to Mrs. Sapley, and then added, in a great hurry, 'Dear sir' to the Professor, 'may I beg you both, when we are all in our places, to go indoors until you hear a blast from my whistle. You men must none of you stir from your posts until that signal is given. Now, then,' he continued, looking round, 'all is arranged save that I must have a post of observation, a coign of vantage; aha! that tree! It seems almost designed for the purpose'—it had, indeed, a kind of ladder of natural footholds leading up to a sort of nest of thick-leaved branches some eight or nine feet above the ground—'and I was always a dab at tree-climbing, so here goes!' He was about to go briskly up into the tree when the Professor, fidgeting, interrupted him with:

'I am sure, Mr. Hawley, we all have every confidence in your skill, and I wouldn't presume to ask irrelevant questions, but might I inquire—that coil of rope which the gardener has laid on the ground under the next tree by your directions—what now, if I might venture—what is it for?'

'For use,' said Mr. Tempest, and went up into the tree.

The Professor and his wife went indoors, she in great trepidation and excitement, he full of hope, which he nervously and volubly expressed, that Hawley, the famed detective, might soon find and use a clue to the mysterious disappearance of the jewels from the handsome mummy which Mrs. Sapley had recently given him as a present.

By the time they had got well indoors Mr. Tempest was beginning to find that his quarters in the tree were a little cramped and

uncomfortable. He poked out his head, and heard voices approaching, whereon he poked it in again, arranging, however, a little peep-hole in the branches through which he could see without being seen. He did at once see two figures, male and female, who leisurely approached a garden-seat near the tree and sat down on it. He recognised them as his nephew Archie and Cicely Paston, and found that he could hear with tolerable distinctness all that they said.

'And so you see,' Archie Tempest was saying as they sat down, 'things do look a little brighter in that way. But I'm afraid you haven't been paying much attention to what I've said.'

'About your new Chief?' asked Cicely demurely.

'Yes—no—yes. About that, of course. But I mean really about everything.'

'Everything,' said Cicely, 'is rather a large order.'

'Well, yes. But don't you see I mean the everything I really care about?'

'Oh! yes, I see,' replied Cicely, 'you regard yourself as the hub of the universe!'

'Now this,' said Mr. Tempest to himself in his hiding-place, 'is quite interesting'; and then added vaguely: 'Ah! youth, youth.'

Cicely meanwhile had repented of her mocking speech even before she saw a slightly pained look come into Archie's eyes, and she now added: 'You know I didn't really mean that. On the contrary, I should be inclined to think that apart, of course, from soldiering, you are a little lacking in—'

'In what?' cried Archie eagerly.

'Well, in—in self-confidence. Oh!'

The exclamation was due to Archie's drawing nearer to her, and then there was a silence, or almost a silence, for there was a slight sound which drew from Mr. Tempest a suppressed sigh, compounded doubtless of multifarious emotions.

'Then you do really care?' asked Archie.

'Haven't you proof positive?' rejoined Cicely.

'You know, Cicely,' the young man continued, 'I never was very good at expressing what I feel and think, but I do think a lot about this if I can't say it.'

'We will take it as said,' Cicely answered between tears and laughter.

'Let me take the size of your finger,' was Archie's next observation.

'Don't be in too great a hurry,' said Cicely.

'And don't *you* say "there's many a slip," for I won't have it,' replied Archie masterfully.

'Well, I won't,' she replied quite meekly.

After another pause :

'I say,' quoth Archie, 'I should so like to tell Nunky at once. He's been everything to me, after my mother, of course, since my father died. I wonder if your dad will come over with him after dinner.'

'And I,' said Cicely more seriously, 'wonder where Mr. Tempest is.'

'Why on earth should you wonder, dear ?'

'Well, as it's you, I'll tell you. I'm never very happy when the dad tries his strange drugs on anybody I care much about, and if I hadn't been very fond of Mr. Tempest before, I should have to be now, shouldn't I ?'

'You darling !' Archie replied. 'But I say, look here, you—you—what's the right phrase ? You fill me with apprehension. You don't really think there's anything wrong ?'

'No ; I don't really think it, but I shall be very pleased when I see Mr. Tempest again none the worse for the famous remedy.'

'By George !' said Archie, 'it would make me miserable—no, nothing could make me quite *miserable* now—but it would spoil things dreadfully if anything went wrong with him. You don't know what a dear old boy he is !'

'I partly know, and you shall teach me the rest. I wish I had said nothing about it. And now, dear——'

'The first *dear* !' Archie interjected with joy.

'It's time for me to go and see what Mrs. Sapley is doing.'

'Come, then,' said Archie, and they walked together, loverwise, to the house.

Mr. Tempest, who had had much ado to keep perfectly quiet during their conversation, peeped out as soon as he judged it safe, and looked after them. Then he said to himself reflectively : 'This is really most touching. I feel, like the man in *Happy Thoughts*, but with more reason, that a little more would move me to tears. Tears ! No ! No ! That would never do ! If I wept I might bring on that confounded malady again, and, if I did, the work of years—I should say of hours—would be wasted ; and if that was wasted, upon my word it won't bear thinking of !' He felt in his pocket and produced the fateful flask. 'There's a shot—ha ! more than a shot—in the locker yet !' He drank. 'That's better. Henry Tempest, you must be a man ! More, you must be

a detective! More yet, you must out-Hawley Hawley! You don't know what may be in store for you.'

Again he little thought as he sank back into his hiding-place how much truth underlay his words.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN that 'odd lot,' the Sapley couple, retired indoors at the bidding of the mock Hawley, the Professor, very literally taking the unknown for the magnificent, considered that everything was being done for the best by the best of detectives, and that he, on whose behalf it was being done, might safely resume the examination of a somewhat puzzling scarab, and therefore went back to the seclusion and quiet of his own special den. With Mrs. Sapley it was far otherwise. She, good lady, had much to agitate her, insomuch that after some undecided hovering and wandering about the house, she betook herself to dusting some specially prized china in a china-closet whereof the window, through which she constantly peered, looked on to the carriage-drive. In one of these peerings she discerned two men, at some distance as yet, walking up the drive. Mrs. Sapley was always curious and inclined to be suspicious, and, if somewhat vague, she was decidedly alert, and, moreover, at this moment had good reason to be on the look-out. She fell then to wondering, first, who these two men were; secondly, if it would be well to ascertain at once, by some simple stratagem, what their business might be. As they drew nearer she recognised in one of them Sir George Paston, while she perceived that the other was a stranger; wonderment gave place to decision, and, catching up her garden-hat and a basket with a pair of garden-shears as she passed through the hall, she sauntered delicately out on the drive as though bent on lopping the bushes that bordered it. When she was within distance of the two persons whom she was really stalking, she gave, by no means unskilfully, a mock start of surprise, and greeted Sir George Paston with an only less skilful air of youthful effusiveness.

'Mrs. Sapley,' cried Sir George in reply, 'the genius of the place, by all that's fortunate!'

'How like Mr. Tempest!' thought the lady to herself, with a blush.

'You will forgive me, I am sure, for coming over early instead of, as I had intended, late in the evening, when you learn the reason

for it. And to make the explanation shorter pray let me present to you my friend Mr. Hawl—' The last syllable was not taken out of his mouth, but on the contrary kept in it, by a violent nudge from the detective, who thus became introduced to Mrs. Sapley as Mr. Hall. 'Who,' continued Sir George, taking up the cue and returning the nudge with painful interest, 'is so greatly interested in Egyptology, and has so little time at his disposal, that I have ventured to bring him over in this absolutely informal manner. For which I humbly await the pardon of the Padrona.'

'Oh! Sir George!' said Mrs. Sapley, 'no need for that, as, indeed, you might know. I am sure, Mr. Hall, the Professor will be as pleased as I am to welcome you to the Grange, and to show you anything in his collection that may interest you. At this moment, I believe, he is engaged in a microscopic investigation of a scarab.'

'Then, madam,' broke in "Mr. Hall," with his Sir Harcourt Courtly manner, 'let me beg of you on no account to disturb him. I know enough myself of the difficulties of investigation' (here he nudged Sir George again) 'to be most unwilling to interrupt the process. I am—ha—hum—'

'Almost as devoted,' said Paston, coming to the rescue, 'to flowers as to Egyptian beetles—aren't you, Hall?—so if, Mrs. Sapley, you would condescend to show us your garden treasures until the Professor is at liberty to exhibit his marvels, it would be most kind of you.'

'Most kind of you, most kind of you, indeed—most kind of you,' was echoed by Hawley, who was not disposed to leave all the talking to Sir George.

Mrs. Sapley, who was genuinely fond and proud of her garden, replied that she would be delighted to comply with the request, and they accordingly took their way to the garden. Sir George explained, as they went, that he had ventured to take the privilege of a friend in leaving his trap at the stables so as to save time to all concerned. Hawley talked vague and big of the delights of a garden, and Mrs. Sapley responded in her most gracious manner. Presently she espied a gardener, and went off, with an excuse to her two guests, to ask him a question. When she was presumably out of ordinary earshot, 'Well, Mr. Hawley,' said Sir George to his companion in his most genial manner, speaking low for extra precaution and using a tone of interrogation.

'Well, Sir George,' returned Hawley, swelling himself out and looking amazingly affable, 'how to thank you for a readiness in

comprehensiveness and apprehensiveness that would do credit to the force itself, though I say it, I really do not know. For what says S'r Alfred to us? "Quickness and presence of mind," he says, "before everything." And presence of mind we have and quick we are, as I'm sure you'll allow.' Sir George bowed assent. 'And to find the same in you, sir,' Hawley flowed on, 'is a pleasure that I shall not readily forget, I can assure you. But I conjecture it's the savage travelling that does it—carrying your life in your hand, as one may say. A man must be sharp on the look-out, Sir George?'

Sir George admitted that a man must have his wits about him.

'So,' Hawley continued, 'when I ventured on the liberty of nudging you—'

'Not at all,' Sir George interrupted.

'You tumbled at once to what I meant, which was——'

'Not to give you away, I imagined,' said Sir George.

'Right you are, Sir George. Not as yet at any rate, for I may learn a deal more unbeknown than if I was to announce myself. For what does S'r Alfred say? "Pick up all you can," he says, "and drop as little as you can." And there you have it, a deal of meaning in a few words; what I call a regular nutshell.'

'Excellently put, indeed,' said Sir George, 'and very creditable to Sir Alfred, though I may perhaps suspect that Mr. Hawley's intellect and experience have something to do with comprising so much instruction in so few words.'

Mr. Hawley looked flattered, wise, and mysterious. Sir George eyeing him, said to himself, following unconsciously in Mr. Tempest's footsteps, 'What an ass he is!' and said aloud, 'At any rate, it shall serve as my chief maxim.' He bowed slightly to Hawley, who looked, if possible, more important than before, and then laid his finger on his lips and cast a quick glance towards the now rapidly returning figure of Mrs. Sapley. Now, it so happened that Mrs. Sapley, while engaged on the quest of the gardener, had, like one of her sex of undying fame, looked back and had noted that Paston and Hawley had their heads together in close confabulation. This, as her perceptions were already on the alert, set her thinking, not perhaps deeply, but with some swiftness, and the result of her thinking was that she arrived—and here, again, we see the long arm of coincidence—at pretty much the same notion which was contained in Hawley's maxim. Only, as she was a woman, the actions which followed on thought were left partly to the guidance of instinct, a quality sometimes far above reason. Thus, when she

and her two guests resumed their walk towards a clock flower-bed which she herself had designed, and when the alleged Mr. Hall, with too obvious carelessness, said something about the frequency of visitors in such glorious weather, Mrs. Sapley, instead of gliding away from the subject, replied rather gushingly :

‘Oh, yes, indeed, of course, we expect more visitors of, I may say, all kinds at such a time as this. And do you know we had one of a very unusual kind just now. What do you think he was, Mr. Hall? Sir George, I am sure you will never guess! Well then, not to keep you on tenter-hooks, it was neither more nor less than a detective.’

‘A *what?*’ exclaimed Mark Hawley, with so strange a divergence from that constant presence of mind on which he had insisted that it was now again the turn of Sir George, nothing loth, to nudge him painfully.

Mrs. Sapley, on her side, said to herself, ‘Ah! then it is, or at least it most likely is,’ and to the others, with a smile of gratification, ‘I thought you might be a little surprised. Yes, oh! most interesting! The Professor—he came down on some business of the Professor’s—has given strict orders against his being disturbed, and so I entertained the detective for a while by myself. He said presently that he would like to look round the grounds quietly, yes, no doubt for some reason of his own.’

Sir George, perceiving that Hawley was nigh to bursting with impatience and indignation, gave him another violent nudge, pulled out his watch, and looking at it, thus addressed Mrs. Sapley :

‘It may at first sight seem both ungracious and unnecessary, dear Mrs. Sapley, that I should look at my watch on the very way to your flower-clock, but the fact is that my friend’s time is short, and yours, I know, is most valuable.’

Mrs. Sapley smiled a gratified acknowledgment, and took up Sir George’s parable. ‘Always thoughtful for others, Sir George,’ she said; ‘well then, if you gentlemen will excuse me, I will go and find out—cautiously, of course, for that is most necessary’ (this she said to gain time)—‘if the Professor has completed his investigations. You cannot now miss the way to the flower-clock, and there you will find one of the gardeners to give you all information. By the way, if you *should* see the detective—he went off in the direction of those woods [Oh! Mrs. Sapley] that you see in what painters call—don’t they, Sir George?—the middle distance—would you mind telling him that dinner, though I don’t know if he will stay to dinner, is at a quarter-past eight—for half-past, yes?’

'With the greatest pleasure, madam,' cried Hawley, unable longer to keep silence; 'but how shall we know this—ha!—detective if we do meet him?'

'Oh!' replied Mrs. Sapley, feeling more than ever sure that she had hit a trail, and remembering vaguely a maxim that truth is sometimes the finest diplomacy, 'I saw him for so short a time, and I didn't take such very special notice of him; but, well, he was rather tall, and rather smart, and he had a moustache rather like yours, Sir George, and he had—I did notice that—a grey tie with a grey pearl pin! And so *au revoir*! I am sure if you don't meet the Professor on your way back you will find him ready to welcome you in the house by the time of your return.' So saying, she tripped off, still smiling, in the direction of the house, but was soon lost to view in a walk winding through the shrubberies.

No sooner had this happened than Hawley, with all the impetus of soda-water released, turned almost on Sir George, crying, 'What did I tell you? The scoundrel. In my new get-up! We must get on his track, and if I don't make him pay for it——' Then, seeing Paston's eyebrows slightly raised, he continued more quietly: 'I do really beg your pardon, Sir George, but it is enough to make any man, even a detective of *my* experience, forget himself for a moment!'

Sir George applied his usual polite formula as a soothing remedy for the other's perturbation, explained that he had understood from Hawley's excusably jerky remarks that their present object had better be to discover at once who or what this supposed detective might be, 'or,' he added, 'this real and unexpected detective; for I cannot help thinking, my dear sir, that the great and famous width of your purview will refuse to reject any possibility, however remote it may seem.'

'Sir George,' answered Hawley, more than mollified by the compliment, 'right you are, and wrong I was. We can't tell for certain who or what the chap may be till we get sight and speech of him. But, to tell you the truth, that grey tie and pearl pin do stick in my gizzard. If it's a coincidence—and I don't say it is, and I don't say it isn't, for we must never judge hastily' (this was said with an air of original wisdom)—'why, then a coincidence it is with a vengeance, and I can't say fairer than that. And you yourself must see, Sir George, that long odds it is that it's some fellow who's got hold of my kit. But, as you say, it's no use talking yet, and we'd better get along and see if we can't catch up with him. Why, what a pretty little lake this is down here in the

hollow ; might come in useful, too. Is it deep, do you know, Sir George ?'

'Middling, I believe,' said the other ; 'but why do you say it might be useful ?'

'Well, things like that do come in handy sometimes ; not so often maybe in real life as when you're dealing with Sherlock Holmes and cattle of that kind. Still, it would be a good place to chuck something into that you wanted to get rid of—wouldn't it, now ?'

Thus beguiling the way with wise saws and modern instances, to the intense contentment of Sir George, Hawley continued walking warily but briskly with his companion towards the woods indicated by Mrs. Sapley.

That astute and Quixotic lady had meanwhile executed a manœuvre of some cunning. When she considered rightly that it was safe to do so, she doubled on her tracks and made her way, taking advantage of various kinds of cover, from which she kept an eye now and again on the retreating forms of Paston and his associate, to the tree where Henry Tempest was awaiting, cheerfully enough now, whatever turn the wheel of Fortune next might bring. Arrived underneath the stockbroker's nest, Mrs. Sapley attempted, greatly daring, to whistle under her breath a bar of 'Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad.' The peculiar grunting sibilation which she produced attracted Mr. Tempest's attention. He looked out, saw her, and beamed. 'It is she, then,' he cried, 'and we are again in the realms of dazzling delight !' He paused, and added very gravely, 'for the moment—Prudence compels me to add *for the moment*.'

'Oh !' Mrs. Sapley made answer, 'such far-seeing wisdom allied with such gallant chivalry ! Indeed, there is but too much reason in what you say. We must consider, and that right quickly. We may even have to plot !'

'Plot !' responded the other. 'And with such a fair accomplice ! Who wouldn't ? And a garden plot, too ! Where's Cato Street now ? A fig for it ! Come to my—counsels !' he substituted just in time for another word.

'Mr. Tempest, we must be calm,' said the lady, divided between gratification and a feeling that prompt action was necessary, 'Sir George Paston is here with a mysterious stranger who calls himself Mr. Hall.'

'Hall !' exclaimed the stockbroker, jumping by an odd freak to a right conclusion ; 'then, depend on it, he's that wig-block

Hawley! Hawley, my dear madam,' he continued, suddenly dropping into a sententious pedantry, 'is not far from being the comparative or superlative of Hall.'

'Yes,' Mrs. Sapley hurried on, 'that is just what I have secretly suspected, and, as you think the same——'

'It must be he!' the other broke in. 'Great wits to madness—I mean, great wits jump. When did you see them last?'

'About a minute ago. They were standing and talking by the little lake.'

'The little lake! Where?'

'In the hollow, just down here to the left. If you stretch up your head—carefully, I beg—you can see it.'

'Ah! I see! Is it deep?'

'Moderately; why?'

'We detectives, that is, we who deal with detectives, must observe everything. One never knows. Hush!'

'What is it?' asked Mrs. Sapley in an agonised whisper.

'I discern Paston and the miscreant. They are walking slowly towards some woods. They stop, they are turning back. We must decide on a plan at once.'

'At once,' echoed Mrs. Sapley; 'what shall we do?'

'I, it is obvious,' he replied, 'must wait and watch here. You, on the other hand, grievous as it is to me, must certainly not be seen here. No; go you in and—let me see, yes—remain concealed until you hear my whistle. Then come out and see what happens.'

And, as Mrs. Sapley tripped blushing off to the house, Mr. Tempest drew in his head again, saying to himself with a chuckle, 'See what happens! By-the-by, that's just what I told Pettigood to do! I wonder what did happen!'

Sir George Paston and Hawley had stopped and turned, because the detective, after a moment or two of silent reflection, had said: 'Sir George, I'm not quite happy about the information we received from Mrs. Sapley. Suppose it was a blind?'

'A blind, my dear sir—Mrs. Sapley?'

'Sir George,' said Mr. Hawley weightily, 'in these matters I am, as the poet says, nothing if not practical. It's only a remote suspicion, as it were, and I may be wrong; but then, again, I may be right.' Mr. Hawley added, confidentially to himself, 'And, for all I know, *you* may be in it.'

Sir George, on his side, by this time had begun to be filled with suspicions, not, indeed, of Mr. Hawley, but with regard to the strange alleged detective. He thought it best to keep these entirely

to himself, to keep his eyes open, and to humour Hawley. Wherefore he replied, 'Of course, it is most likely you are right. What do you recommend, or, let me rather say, what do you direct—for, of course, we are at your orders—as the next proceeding?'

'It is most important,' answered Hawley, 'that I should observe and be myself unobserved. I have a strange presentiment—mind you, I don't altogether hold with them, but I don't like to neglect them either—that something remarkable will happen in or close to that little lake. That is where I should like to station myself.'

'Ah!' said Sir George, 'no doubt very wise. But there appears to me to be no natural hiding-place.'

'That,' said Hawley, 'is the one difficulty.'

Paston, who perceived that Hawley was obstinately set upon this new scheme, continued to humour him, and proposed that they should go into the house and see if they could devise some artificial 'cover.' This was done, and the first and only person they met was Archie coming out of the billiard-room, where he had been knocking the balls about and thinking over his great good fortune. To him Paston rapidly explained the situation, contriving to make him understand that Hawley was to be humoured.

'Ha!' said Archie. 'It's not so easy. There is an old watchman's box, but that would be too conspicuous. Let me see. I have it. The new mummy-case!'

The others stared, as well they might.

'It's all right, I assure you,' said Archie—'as right as rain. It won't show much in the dip, and if it does it'll pass for a new fad of the Professor's. *He* won't like it, but that can't be helped. We've only got to take the old gentleman—Rameses, or whatever his name is—out, and then, if Mr. Hawley doesn't mind the inconvenience——'

'Of course not,' broke in Hawley. 'Sir, the suggestion does you infinite credit. Some holes to look through and breathe through. The lid shut, but not fastened tight.'

'The plan is admirable,' said Sir George with much diversion under the gravest air. 'To work at once.'

The mummy-case was emptied, carried out by the three conspirators, and laid down close by the edge of the lake; Hawley got into the case. The other two put on the lid and went back to the house. Their proceedings, from the moment when they came out of the house bearing the mummy-case, had been closely and

anxiously watched by Mr. Tempest from his tree. He had at once recognised Hawley, and as soon as the detective got into the case, swiftly formed a plan. He descended cautiously from the tree, and blew a very low blast on his whistle. It was loud enough to bring the men whom he had posted from their hiding-places. As they appeared he impressively enjoined silence by easily understood pantomime. He was just about to give them whispered directions when Professor Sapley, who had been leaning out of his window, and who had barely caught the sound of the whistle, joined the little crowd expectantly. A man less ready of resources than Mr. Tempest at that moment was might have been put out. Instead of which he immediately adapted his plan to this occurrence. He beckoned the newcomer mysteriously to draw close to him, and said, in a melodramatic whisper, to the Professor and his myrmidons: 'I have discovered all. Not a word for your lives. Not a moment is to be lost. In that long box—crane your heads and you can see it——'

'My mum——' began the Professor.

'Hush!' said Mr. Tempest, 'it contains an infernal machine timed to go off in six minutes. Stalk it cautiously and drown it in there. I have said. Take the signal from me, this whistle.'

Again lifting his hand to enjoin caution and silence, he nipped nimbly back into his tree, whence, still with fearsome mystery, he motioned them towards their quarry, which they approached in inconceivably absurd attitudes of caution and in almost absolute silence. Hawley could not see them because all the hastily made holes were on the other side of the mummy-case. When they were quite close Mr. Tempest, with a reminiscence of Cambridge days, counted to himself, 'Five—four—three—two—one—' then he blew a monstrous blast on his whistle. The mummy-case was immediately lifted and flung with a great splash into the lake, and at the same moment, Mr. Tempest slipped quietly down the tree into the arms of one who was watching and waiting for him below.

(To be continued.)

Time and Tide.

THE snow-capped mountains of Kurdistan were just visible on the horizon line behind us ; toward them rolled wave after wave of low brown tracts of land, utterly destitute of any form or sign of life. Behind, as in front, like the coils of a shining serpent, wound the thin white line of the Tigris bed, the one response to the light overhead, imparting a sense of weary pursuit in its never-ending course. Fresh coils unwound themselves ahead as we toiled after new yet familiar spots on a never-changing horizon. Now and then the raftsmen dipped their oars quietly into the water, and with a few strokes twisted the raft into the straightest part of the river ; otherwise, we were helpless, in the hands of an arbitrary current, which made us bide its time as it slunk pensively round unsuggesting corners, or sped us faster when it gurgled impatiently over a long reach, where grey rock vied momentarily with the endless grey mud. We had given ourselves up completely to Time, and sat all day contemplating one stretch of bank after another as we swirled along. The ripple of the water, the intermittent splash of the oars, the crooning songs of the raftsmen all added to the sense of drowsy contemplation already established by the surrounding view. Everything was in contemplative harmony ; isolated herons fished from slippery stones, gazing with such intentness into the passing water that they hardly deigned to raise their heads towards us, and if they ever deemed it wiser to move out of our way, they would do so by a very deliberate walk on to the shore, after fixing a resentful, half-wondering stare upon us. Flocks of black ducks, suddenly disturbed round a corner, would rise in silent indignation, and with a sharp whirr would pass over our heads and drop quietly down on to the waters behind, smoothing out their ruffled plumage. Fat, ungainly penguins sitting in white rows, like surpliced choirs, on the shallow shore, would scuttle further back along the mud flat, and, taking up attitudes of doubtful interrogation, would

stare us out of countenance. One and all they condescended to no notes of fright or alarm, and where any sound was uttered it impressed us only with a sense of resentful indignation or of mocking inquiry. We were intruders in specially reserved spots, and could only offer apologies to our unwilling hosts by showing our appreciation of their mode of life in a respectful silence ; indeed, to have uttered any sound in such places would have seemed a crime against Nature ; so we floated on, casually returning the stares of the would-be enemy, while we listened with lazy indifference to their taunts and threats. At times, when there was complete absence of life on the shore, we confined our attention to more personal reflections.

We were a strange assortment of human beings whom accident had thrown together to live the same life for an allotted time in such close companionship on a small space. Here sat the Moslem in friendly relation with us Western Christian infidels ; the Armenian broke bread with the hated oppressor of his race and religion ; while the Turk, on his side, had to endure the presence of his despised enemy. The Arab soldiers and the Kurdish boatmen represented tribes whose traditions told of constant deadly feuds and warfare. The whim of one among us had gathered us together. What casual observer would realise what we had in common ? For difference of language, custom, and appearance counts for little when all are equally exposed to the chance of circumstance ; and the bonds that united us all with a common feeling were the hardships we endured alike from hunger, cold, and danger. We shivered together in wind and rain, and basked in sun together ; we suffered pangs of hunger together and rejoiced together over a meal ; we faced the same perils with the same chances of escape or annihilation. Whomsoever fortune had chosen for her favourites in the ordinary run of life stood here on the same level as their less fortunate companions to take their chance under the same conditions.

We each had our several occupations when we felt that it was possible to snatch any time from contemplation. Hassan would retire into the hut at one end of the raft, and, sitting cross-legged on the floor, would chop up tobacco ; while one of the soldiers, seated at the door, would roll up the cigarettes. Now and then he would reach out one to me. 'Will you smoke, Effendi ?' and the other soldier seated between us outside would strike me a match.

Arten, the cook, might easily have worked all day, but he

seemed to spend most of his time contemplating the brazier on which he occasionally cooked something ; at intervals he blew up the live charcoal with measured puffs ; or he would sit perilously near the extreme edge of the raft contemplating the sky, with the tails of his dirty black overcoat dangling in the water, and holding the dishes in the river until most signs of the last meal were removed from them. Being an Armenian, he was endowed with a more restless nature, and the apparent contemplation in his demeanour was but the dejection resulting from a broken spirit. When not engaged in his own pursuits he would break in on the silence by pointing out what he considered objects of interest.

'Look, look, there is a bird !' he would say ; and the true Easterns would gaze on without moving a muscle, looking neither at him nor at the bird. Arten would look nervously round, knowing from long experience that he was being despised, but unable to understand the grating silencing effect of allusions to the obvious at the moment when the obvious is being most thoroughly appreciated.

The two raftsmen were obliged to concentrate a certain amount of attention on the business of navigation, but they seized every moment they could spare from the task of guiding the raft, and, leaning on their oars, would devote it to contemplation. They, too, pointed out objects of interest, but only in their capacity as local guides and in a monosyllabic manner in complete harmony with the occasion.

'Christian village,' they would say, without looking round, pointing a thumb over their shoulders in the direction of a group of mud huts ; or 'Arab' when an encampment of black tents appeared on the bank. Hassan and the soldiers would respond by slowly turning their eyes in the particular direction, perhaps even going so far as to give vent to a sudden, sharp 'Ha !' if the occasion was one of particular moment. Arten, however, would jump about the raft :

'A Christian village. Look, it is there ! Do you see, did you hear ? A Christian village.'

No one would answer him.

'Did you hear, Hassan ?'

A minute of absolute stillness, and then Hassan's deep, deliberate voice, with no suggestion of impatience :

'I heard——'

But we did not always drift along in a smooth and idle manner ; the mud banks gave way in time to steep, rocky sides, between which the waters flowed more rapidly, and careful steering with

the oars was required to avoid rocks and whirlpools; and here there were not infrequent signs of life. Rock tombs were cut in the walls of rock, and we should have liked to stop and examine them further; but it was impossible to land the raft at such places, and the current hurried us on almost before we were aware of their existence. There was a certain relentlessness about the way we were torn past all objects of interest; it was like dealing with Time. We were conscious that things passed now were passed for ever, and we should never have another opportunity for realising them. Evidences of ancient civilisation, episodes in the every-day life of the present tribes, all seemed to sweep past with bewildering, incredible swiftness. We found it hard, sitting there, to believe that it was we who swept past them. Now we would catch sight of a wedding procession on the bank, the bride, plastered with feathers and ornaments, being escorted to the bridegroom's village amid a din of music and shouting, the sound of which would follow us long after the party was lost to view: now it would be a group of women washing their clothes at the river's edge, beating them on large, flat stones: now a solitary horseman would stand motionless on the cliff above—his coloured cloak, flowing over his horse's back, barely concealing the brilliant hues of his embroidered saddle; he would watch us out of sight and then turn and pursue his lonely road: now a shepherd boy would be driving in the flocks of sheep and goats at sundown, and his weird calls and the answering bleat of the animals would echo and re-echo right away across the distant hills. Men and women on the bank hailed us as we passed. We could only cast one look at them and wave back a hurried and kindly greeting. They knew we must not stop and talk. We came out of a different world from theirs, and they paused for a moment to gaze at us and then returned, forgetful of the fleeting vision, to their own pursuits. Meditative oxen, chewing their cud, surveyed us wonderingly from the shore. 'Why in such a hurry?' they seemed to say; and we answered: 'We are not in a hurry, but we have no power to stop.' And the eagles overhead peered in contemptuous security at us, vaunting with arrogant flaps the great wings with which they flew whither they listed, while we were being swept along uncertain currents; a hidden bird would pour forth his sweet song to cheer us on our way, and the owls utter dismal notes of warning as of unknown dangers yet to come.

But such interpretations of the owl calls did not occur to us as we floated down this tranquil course which required

no thought or exertion of our own, and it was not till later that we recalled and associated them, almost unconsciously, with past dangers; for, all unnoticed, black clouds had been gathering round us, and before we were aware of the change we seemed to be plunged instantaneously into the very midst of a howling gale in a rocky part of the river. Sudden gusts caught the walls of the hut and swirled us round, the playthings of a merciless, raging force, at one moment tearing us into the middle of the stream, at the next dashing us with redoubled vigour against its rocky sides. The rain came down in blinding torrents, and the waves, breaking over the surface of the raft, made it seem as if we were being submerged altogether. Then we rose on the crest of a wave once more, which dashed us against the wall of rock rising precipitously at the side, with a force which seemed as if it must shatter asunder all the bending, creaking poles of the raft. The soldiers stood at the edge trying to break the force of the blows with the butt ends of their rifles, while the raftsmen struggled fruitlessly at the oars. The lowering black sky, the raging black waters, the unyielding black walls of rock gave a grim setting of darkness to this struggle, which proved to be no less than a fight with death itself. Our companions, the birds, clung huddled up with fright to sheltering walls of rock, or crept into niches, where they cowered together, hiding their heads under their wings. Even the noise of the wind and waters could not drown the wild, terrified shriek of startled crows when we were dashed against their hiding-places, and they flew close past our heads to seek a fresh shelter.

This, then, was what we had been drifting to through all those heedless days of idle contemplation. It seemed as if the jealous gods, conscious of our forgetfulness of their authority, were proclaiming our powerlessness against their decrees. They tossed us ruthlessly about until we were reduced to a state of subordination, and then, as if repenting of their anger, they caused the wind to lull and shot out a gleam of sunshine through the dark clouds. We passed out beyond the walls of rock on which the wet drops now gleamed like bits of silver, and drifted into a broad slow stream with low shelving banks. On the last ledge, with downcast heads, sat three great vultures, disappointed of their prey.

Hassan thoughtfully rolled some cigarettes; he lit one and handed it to me; then he lit another and handed it to X. She shook her head. 'Smoke,' he said sternly. X. took the cigarette, and, all need for action being over, we resumed our attitudes of

contemplation. But the atmosphere of lazy indifference seemed to be dispelled. Whither were we drifting? Were we at any moment likely to be snatched from this state of peaceful acquiescence in our surroundings and be hurled to destruction with no word of warning or choice in the matter?

'Ah, well, kim bilior?' ('who knows?') I said out loud.

'Who knows what?' said Hassan.

'What is going to happen to us?' I said.

'Kim bilior?' repeated Hassan. 'Allah bilior' ('God knows'); and then, after a minute's silence, he repeated: 'Kim bilior? Allah bilior!'

I looked up at him.

'It is so,' he said, nodding his head solemnly. 'Kim bilior? Allah bilior!'

The influence of the Eastern mind asserted itself; the future had no interest for them. Allah had arranged their destiny; it had nothing to do with them, and no thought or effort on their part would make any difference. Nor had the past any interest for them. They lived in the present, enjoying the pleasant places and accepting the unpleasant ones with no fear or resentment.

The storm was over, and they set about drying their clothes and making preparations for the next meal. The raftsmen slowly unwound his kafiyeh and wiped his head all over; then he spread the coloured rag out to dry. The soldiers rubbed their rifles carefully and hung them up inside the hut. Then one of them spread out his cloak on the far corner of the raft and went through the midday prayer; the other borrowed a needle and thread from me and began darning a tear in his ragged uniform.

The sun shone brightly, and our clothes were soon dry. Birds appeared on the bank shaking their feathers and stretching out one limb after another. The lull that follows a great storm reigned over everything; all Nature seemed resting after her exertions. Ali Chous finished his prayer and began to sing; the boatmen joined in the chorus, clapping their hands. An element of cheerful carelessness established itself on board. I went inside and began to invent a pudding for dinner. Arten was not enlightened in his profession as cook, and I was trying to supplement his deficiencies by the light of Nature, for Arten did not seem to have that sort of light. I tied the mixture up in a handkerchief and set it to boil in a pot on the brazier. One by one the men came in and sat round the fire, gazing silently at the pot as they smoked away. After a time I took the lid off and examined the contents.

'Is it really going to be a pudding?' asked X., with an agonised expression.

I tried to recall what puddings looked like in England, and then remembered that I had never seen one at this stage.

'I cannot say till it's finished,' I said.

The pudding still clung ominously to the handkerchief. I had greased it well, and have since heard that you only grease pans. I gave it a few minutes longer; then, as we were all hungry, I fished it out of the pot and untied the handkerchief.

'Bak!' ('Look') said Arten.

'Bak!' said Hassan.

'Bak!' said the soldiers.

'Bak!' said the boatmen.

It was a moment of extreme tension.

I slipped it on to a plate.

'Now look,' said Arten.

'See, now, what a cook she is,' said Hassan; 'a wonderful cook.'

'Mashallah,' said the soldiers.

'Mashallah,' said the boatmen.

'It is a pudding,' said X.; 'a real pudding.'

We all gazed at it for several moments in ecstatic excitement. I handed X. a spoon, and we each took a mouthful; then we looked at one another.

'It is a pudding,' said X. again.

It almost seemed as if she were trying to persuade herself of the fact against the dictates of reason. When we had finished, the men shared our spoons in turn. Each one cautiously raised a spoonful and smelt it; then they swallowed it, very much as one remembers swallowing jam in the nursery when one knew there was a powder inside.

'Ehe' ('Good'), they said very deliberately, nodding their heads; and then, as they handed the spoon to their neighbour, 'Inghiliz,' they added. One felt that the first word was Turkish politeness, the second was a veiled warning to their brethren.

But, on the whole, it seemed a success; we had a sense of repletion. How often had we not swallowed bowls of rice and been only conscious of a great internal void.

The men carried our rugs outside, and we stretched ourselves lazily out on the open end of the raft. I began to reflect upon Time and Destiny. No shadow of a cloud appeared to disturb the horizon, no obstruction in the river affected our steady onward course down the slow wide stream. We took the current where it

served, and so were not delayed in the shallows where the waters dallied about the banks. They, in due course, would arrive at their destination and pour themselves unquestioning and unquestioned into the oblivious sea ; but what would Time, that unremitting, relentless current, do with us ? Was it going to hurl us, too, into oblivion ? Whatever it had to give was ours, and yet because we could not stop it we were not master of it. We could moor to the shore and let the river go on without us. The current did not wait for us, but we could pick it up again when we were ready for it and go on without loss ; but in the current of Time, when we stay on one side and let the moments go past us, we have lost for ever what those moments had to give, and our arrival at our destination has not been delayed ; it is so much the nearer.

'X.,' I said, 'where do you think we are floating to ?'

'Baghdad,' said X.

'I wasn't thinking geographically,' I answered. 'Are we drifting to eternity or oblivion ? Being hurried along by this current gives me an uncomfortable feeling of not being allowed any choice as regards time, which I resent. Do you mind it at all ?'

'No,' said X. ; 'I feel that I have lost all conception of Time, and that we are floating on, as it were, to eternity.'

'Do you ?' I said dubiously. 'I feel it's oblivion we are getting to.'

'But we are only three days off Baghdad,' insisted X.

'Well,' I answered, 'I devoutly pray that we may get there first.'

We had floated within sight of Samarra, a town made conspicuous by the huge blue dome of its mosque, and which, we learnt later on, was a place of pilgrimage for Mahomedans of the Sheeah sect.

Hassan announced his intention of landing here to replenish the store of charcoal.

'Then I'll get off too,' said X. 'I want to see inside that mosque.'

X. had a mania for looking at mosques. We had seen inside hundreds, and she never seemed to get tired of them. I connected the process chiefly with having to unlace your boots, a proceeding I detest, and dawdle over cold floors in your stocking-feet ; then you had to remember to cross your hands in front ; if you put them behind your back or in your pockets you were a marked infidel.

The raft was run along the shore, and we walked up to the

town. It was enclosed by a high mud wall, which was defended by towers and bastions. We entered through a large gateway, and found ourselves among a collection of falling mud houses lining the usual dirty, narrow streets. Hassan went in search of charcoal, and we, accompanied by Ali Chous, strolled on to the mosque. We were followed by the usual crowd of curious-minded inhabitants, but being by this time quite used to these attentions, we did not notice them particularly. X. was in front, and advanced towards the low line of chains which barred the entrance to the building. She was in the act of stepping over the chains when an excited-looking fanatic rushed at her and hurled her across the street with what appeared to be effusive execrations. In one moment we were hemmed in by an angry, buzzing mob. There was no mistaking the glaring menaces of their expressions and the significant handling of the long knives worn by all natives in their belts. We realised in a flash that we had somehow unwittingly aroused the dangerous side of Eastern fanaticism. Resistance was out of the question; a sign of fear would be fatal. All day-dreams were at an end. I recalled the vague forebodings the storm had first aroused in me. Was it only a few minutes ago that X. had said she felt like floating to eternity, and I had maintained that we should be hurled into oblivion? Were we only joking then? Now we were face to face with grim reality. Hassan's words rang in my ears—'Kim bilior? Allah bilior!' ('Who knows? God knows!').

We stopped and looked over the crowd. Ali Chous, our only protector, stood beside us white and trembling, appealing to some of the leading men, who hesitated and glared at us in wavering suspicion. Hassan was nowhere in sight.

'Let's stroll on as far as the end of the street,' said X.

'Yes,' I answered; 'that seems a good idea.'

'Don't let's hurry,' she said.

'No,' I replied; 'we have plenty of time.'

The crowd made way for us as we turned from the mosque, and we walked on beyond it up through the bazaars. The men had begun to fight and wrangle among themselves; the narrow street was tightly packed, and the crowd surged up behind us as we walked on. We were in the covered part of the bazaars. The usual bright-coloured kafiyehs hung outside; gaudy cotton coats of Eastern make lay on the top of bales of Manchester prints and flannelettes; there was the leather stall, with gorgeous beaded bridles and handsomely embroidered native saddles; and next to

it was the boot bazaar, with none of our blackness about it, but a mass of red and yellow sandals. We had seen it all, just the same, in a score of similar villages; but I took it all in this time as I had never taken it in before.

'What a funny baby's garment that is!' said X.

The crowd behind was beginning to push.

'Yes,' I said; 'I wonder how it gets outside the baby.'

An angry buzz arose just behind us. Were they going to stick us in the back? We both disdained to turn our heads to see.

'I hope Hassan will think of getting some spinach,' I said; 'there was some in the vegetable bazaar.'

'He knows you like it,' X. answered. 'He is sure to get it.'

We had come to the end of the row of stalls. We slowly turned and faced the mob.

'This is the obvious moment for annihilation,' I thought to myself. 'I wonder why I'm not afraid.'

I was waiting in momentary expectation of death, but at the same time I could not realise that we were going to be killed. I did not seem to be able to take in what being killed was. I felt very indifferent, and noticed that I had lost a button off my coat. But the crowd made way for us, and we sauntered back. Further down we met Hassan.

'What is all this crowd about?' he said.

X. told him. He made no answer, and we walked on together.

We got outside the gates of the town, but were still within a few minutes' walk of the river.

'I'm tired,' said X. 'Let's rest here a minute,' and she lay down on the ground.

I looked round. There was still a noisy crowd at the gates of the town, and we were being followed out by some of the rowdier members. I had a vague idea that it would have been more comfortable to lie down on the raft; but there was no accounting for tastes, and it was all in the day's work. I sat down beside X. There was a white stone a few yards away larger than the others which lay about. I picked up a handful of the smaller stones.

'Best out of ten,' I said to myself. 'If I hit, we get off; if I don't hit, we are done for. There is no current about this; it's all chance'; and I started lazily throwing at the large stone. Hassan stood by smoking. I missed the first, and the second, and the third. Ali Chous looked uneasily at the crowd beginning to straggle out towards us. The fourth hit, and the fifth; the sixth missed. Two more misses and we should be done for. Ali Chous begged us to

come on. The seventh and the eighth hit; the ninth missed. The next throw would settle the question.

Two men had come up, and stood looking at us.

'Let's come on now,' said X., sitting up.

'One minute,' I said; and I carefully picked out a nice round pebble. It hit.

'What a baby you are!' said X.

We boarded the raft and pushed off. It was a lovely calm evening. The current was straight enough for us to glide quietly along with no assistance from the oars. The last traces of the setting sun slowly disappeared, and gradually the stars reflected twinkling points of silver in the black water, dancing brightly in the moving current. A silence as of death reigned over everything; the blackness of death peered out of the deep waters; the slow but surely moving current was drifting us on relentlessly towards an uncertainty suggesting death; and with it there was a tremendous sense of stillness and peace.

I was sitting very near the edge looking into the dark waters.

'I don't want to die yet,' I said.

'You are such a time taking things in,' said X., 'that you would not be aware that you were dead until so long after the event that it would hardly matter to you. You weren't afraid, were you?'

'No,' I answered.

We were silent for a while; then Hassan spoke.

'If you had crossed the chain,' he said, 'there would have been no more pashas for me to travel with. Inside is the tomb of the last Imam of the race of Ali, and no Christian may look upon it and live.'

I looked again into the deep waters, and began to take it all in—what I had seen in the men's faces and how they would have done it. Hassan put a rug over me; I had shivered. I wasn't cold. It was all over, we were safe; but I was knowing what it was to be afraid.

L. JEBB.

The Jarl's Mercy.

NOW, as all the townfolk shouted, the jarl to the gangway came,
And passed on board of *Tranàn*, for that was his longship's name.

A poor little boy, one Thorolf, sprang after him from the quay,
Who cried, 'I starve in Bergen, O take me over the sea!' Then the jarl cast Thorolf from him, that down on the deck he fell,

And loud was the shipmen's laughter, for the shipfolk held it well.

They loved the jarl and his bounty, and thought it an idle thing

That a starving brat from Iceland should trouble the son of a king.

But yet was one man silent; grim grew his swarthy face,
For long had he served Jarl Eric, and he deemed it high disgrace
That before the Bergen townfolk, the jarl, with his store of gold,
Should thrust from him hungry children, to starve and die in the cold.

So he gripped his axe right starkly, and he spake like a Norseman free,

'A boon! a boon! Jarl Eric, wilt give that child to me?

By his dress he comes from Iceland, and an Iceland man am I.

I'll rear him up as a viking: I'll not let him starve nor die!'

Though at first the jarl looked wrathful, on a sudden his face grew bright.

'Yes, take him, Thorgrim Ulfsson—I'm wrong, and thou art right.'

So he spake, and the shipfolk cheered him, till the townfolk joined in the cry,

And poor little Thorolf shouted, 'Jarl Eric's man am I!'

GEORGE W. MURRAY.

The Making of a Man.

BEING A CHAPLAIN'S REMINISCENCE.

I.

I HAVE halted long on the title to this little story, but there is no other which will quite so well express all that comes up to my mind whenever I think of it—this story of an unrecorded incident—as I so often do think and ponder. That title, as I have written it, seems always to me the truest and most right foreword for what follows—which, as I humbly conceive, is what a title should be. But to begin.

It befell, then, during the final stages of the late unhappy war in South Africa, that I was doing duty as chaplain to a certain great hospital on the line of the railway in the Free State, when, on a day which still comes up again to me as clear as yesterday, there marched in a certain famous column, the coming of which stirred me very deeply. The most vivid memory of my existence was connected with one squadron of that column—a memory that time may indeed mellow, but can never eradicate while life remains to me; and if I say that the warmest part of that memory is that which re-pictures the gentlemanly understanding and the manly sympathy shown to me in a bitter moment by all ranks of that squadron, it will be well believed that I looked forward with some stir of happiness to the pleasure of shaking hands with one or two members of it that day.

Before I could seek my friends, however, there was first the sad duty of receiving the sick and wounded of the column into hospital, and it was while that grave task was being performed that I met, sooner than I had anticipated, with one of the two I most desired to see. The ambulances had drawn up outside the line of white-washed stones that marked the boundary of the hospital; stretcher by stretcher the sufferers were being borne along the stone-marked paths to the different marquees or pavilions, when in the midst I saw one figure that my eagerness knew at once for that of the grey old sergeant-major of D Squadron—my squadron, as my heart fondly calls it—of Rostron's Horse.

His back was to me as he walked slowly along, bearing the rear end of a stretcher in which lay the shrunken figure of a lad whose sunken face showed him far stricken in enteric, that most dread scourge of war. Thus, though I hastened at once to come up to him, yet I refrained from greeting him, or in any way catching his eye, till he should have arrived where he must lay his burden down; by which means it befell that, as we halted at the journey's end, I, too, heard the words of a thoughtless bystander, one of the convalescents, one who had no business to speak: 'What is the matter with this one?' he asked of those who bore the stretcher.

'Enteric—bad,' answered the sergeant-major, hesitatingly.

With that the convalescent committed his folly. 'Oh! enteric! Then he's——' And with a grimace and a gesture he conveyed that 'Enteric—bad,' might be interpreted as 'Doomed' in that hospital.

The sergeant-major had just straightened himself upright from putting down the stretcher when this evil answer was made to him. It must have gone to his heart like a spear, for I heard him draw in a heavy breath, and he turned slowly round as if to look at the familiar world again in the light of that verdict. Then, since I was standing but a step behind him, it befell that his face, whitening as he turned it, looked into mine with a moment's vacantness as he tried to regain command of himself. And the whiteness of that bold grey face, that I had seen so lion-like in the fighting at Ichabod's Kop, went so near my heart here that I stepped forward and took his hand and spoke—softly: 'Nay, sergeant-major, the lad shall do well yet. And there are many men recovering daily from enteric in this same hospital.'

He held his breath for a minute before he spoke, gripping my hand like iron the while. Then, with a quick jerk of the head, he shook aside the moisture in his eyes, and—his voice failing him in the first attempt, and coming but hoarsely in the second—said to me in answer: 'Ah, sir, is it you?'

That he should remember me so quickly in such a moment gladdened me to the soul, and encouraged me to fall to such kindly words as I thought would most comfort his brave spirit; for, like a halo above him, my eyes were seeing again the vision of this man as he so captain-like led the men at Ichabod's Kop, when courage and skill brought honour from a field that had otherwise been but another barrenness.

As quickly as I might, too, I got a kindly doctor to examine this lad that he loved—one who spoke such words of cheer that

at length, all being done that could be done for that while, and the lad lying quiet between clean sheets, his head on smoothed pillow, I was presently able to draw my grey friend away to my own tent, where I might endeavour something to lighten the foreboding that oppressed his spirit so, in spite of the doctor's comforting predictions. There, offering him coffee and good tobacco, I sat with him in quiet, letting him ruminate till he should fall to words, unburdening himself of his heaviness in talk—his own talk of his own trouble. Thirty years of South Africa in its length and its breadth had made him a true colonial, so that he had no shyness in speech when at last he began, and I, listening, heard this story which I here retell. It is true that I cannot reproduce the exact diction as the words fell upon my ear, there in that cool tent; but the matter of it sank so surely into place in my mind that I shall not fail of conveying it to you, at least near enough for you to miss no significance of it.

'You see, sir,' he began at last, 'it's me that let the lad come to the war at all; that's what hits me so hard. I had him with me, learning his trade, waggon-building, down yonder in Grahams-town, before the war—the nicest young lad I ever had in the shop. And when the war came and I dropped the hammer and joined Brabant's, why, even then the youngster wanted to come, and him no taller than a sledge-hammer, as you may say.

'Then, when I'd done my time in Brabant's, and another six months in the S.A.L.H., and was doing my first term in this, Rostron's, well, he begun to write me letters swearing he'd join the worst regiment in the field if I didn't let him come up to mine, and he was in the Town Guard there already. So when I'd finished my first six months with Rostron's, and they promoted me sergeant-major, and gave me a month's furlough to Grahamstown if I'd look out for a few recruits, why, then there was no holding him.

'I didn't like to bring him, because his mother's got no other son but him; but he climbed into the train when I thought of coming away, and he swore he'd fight me if I tried to chuck him off, for it was no use, he'd come up anyhow. And he'd got his Town Guard khaki on, and he did look tall—quite as tall as I was—and the tears were shining in his eyes, and the red was flushing in his face, and he was pleading so to get me to let him come. And I let him.

'Well, we came up here, and we lay in the detail camp in this very town, waiting for the column to come in so we could join it, and it did seem like he was the brightest and the happiest lad that

ever lived in those few days. And he'd weary me day and night for tales of the regiment, and the squadron, and Old Fireproof—you know, sir, that's our name for the captain—and every night the last word he'd say he'd remind me that he was to come into D Squadron, so as to be under Old Fireproof too.

'And then, sir, you should have seen his misery when he thought he'd disgraced himself for ever, the very day the column was coming in. That was a day. The blazing fool of a commandant, that was here in the town then, he must send out a wood party, and he wouldn't send it out to the side the column was coming in on, where it would be safer. No; it must go out on the other side—a gang of sick-lame-and-lazy details it was—and naturally the only good man in it got snaffled.

'I wasn't with it; I was on duty here in the town, or I'd never have let it go near that spot—I know the place too well. Neither would I have let the young fellow go with such a gang if I'd been there, but I wasn't; and so he got himself detailed for the party, and got an old horse—he'd taken the worst screw of the whole lot rather than not go—and he was as happy as a bird there, far out in front of everybody else, because they lagged and crawled so. They were that sort.

'And then, all of a sudden, he found himself looking down about forty rifles, not twenty yards away, and all the wide round world roaring, "Hands up!"

'He must have gone white to the bone as he let his rifle drop. He told me afterwards—the one time he'd ever talk about it—that he felt like his heart and his blood and his soul dropped down there with that rifle on the ground. And then they stripped him; stripped him to the naked white of his skin, and sent him shining back across the veldt like a young lost angel. It's a God's-thanks there was no water between that spot and Vandenburg. He'd have drowned himself for shame.

'He never said a word as he came in. When the sentry asked him what happened he just shook his head. And then I was there, and he saw me, and, if a boy's heart could break in his breast, his heart would have broken then. He turned right round, as if he'd walk away out of camp, or anywhere away from my face; but I'd seen his eyes, and—well, I had him up in my arms just like his mother must have had him when he was little, and I turned again and started for our blankets.

'The fool commandant was fussing up on his horse. "Hi! here! you there, stop! what's happened?" But—"Hell!" said

I (only I suppose he didn't hear that); and on I went, and laid the lad down on our blankets and covered him over. And he wasn't crying like a child, but crying like a grown man—horrible—horrible.

'Well, and I rigged up two blankets for a tent again to hide him, and the A.S.C. fellows sneaked me some clothes out of store for him—they knew what I was feeling and the lad—and I might have got him another rifle, too, and a bandolier, but he wouldn't have them. "No, Tom," says he, "never again. Clothes I must have to cover me; but rifles, no. I'm a coward; a coward; and that's done me. No more rifles; I'm a coward."

'Then some man outside shouted to his chum, "Yonder comes the column! See the dust!" And there and then I thought the lad would go clean off his mind. "Can't you send me away somewhere, Tom? Can't you get me on one of these trains to Cape Town before the column comes in? The captain will be coming over here, and he'll see me—if he does, I tell you, I'll jump right under the wheels—the very next train that passes—I will."

'If I could have got him to tell me how it happened it wouldn't have been any better. He was disgraced, he said, and that was enough without talking about it. And I knew as well as the sun that he wasn't, and that whatever else he'd done it wasn't cowardly. "Why," said I, "it's nothing. Hundreds and hundreds of men get taken prisoner and come in naked every hour of the day." But he wouldn't listen.

"No," says he. "Besides, those men done some good fighting first; not prisoner the very first time they saw a Boer with a rifle. And, anyhow, I wasn't going to be taken prisoner. I was going to keep right close up to Old Fireproof in the charges, when he takes the koppies, so he wouldn't have to keep getting there with only nine or ten, like you say he does do. And now——!"

'Well, the A.S.C. they brought me some rum, thinking it would stir his heart up like. But he wouldn't have it. "Rum's for men," said he. "Cowards shouldn't drink up the men's rum so they'll be short." I did want to punch his young head for him then, but you can't when they're like that. So the A.S.C. they nodded and they left us alone again; they were gentlemen.

'If ever I was in misery it was then. It got so bad with hearing him calling himself coward that at last I said: "Look here, if you say that just once more I'll give you the nicest pair of black eyes any man ever had." And—"Do," says he.

'Then I said something I was sorry for. "Look here, if you don't buck up, Charlie, I'll write and tell your mother!"

! 'Wasn't I sorry! He just gripped hold of my two hands, and—"Don't!" says he. "Don't, Tom!" in a voice just like I've heard actors on the stage. It went through me like pulling pieces out of my chest. "All right; I won't, chum," said I. "I won't—only you lie down again now."

'Well, he did. And then, all in a minute, just like a little child, he was fast asleep, his forehead on his hands, but his face turned far enough sideways for me to see the wet on his long eyelashes. His father should have been there then, but he was killed up in Rhodesia.

'So while he was asleep I got an M.I. corporal to watch him, and to knock him down with a rifle if he waked up while I was gone. And off I went to see Old Fireproof and tell him all about it. He's the daddy of them all when a man's in a bad mess like that.

'But there was luck for you! He'd been hustled off down to Bloemfontein to draw ordnance stores, and he'd got on a train and gone, not fifty yards in front of my eyes, and me not seeing him because of the station buildings in the way. "He'd be back to-morrow," said Old Rostron. "To-morrow!" says I, and me thinking there of all the hours between now and then. And besides, there was the night. But I know what I did that night. I just made our blankets down together again, and I handcuffed the youngster to me. He had to stop.

'Well, next day I watched the trains come in like a dog watching for its master, and when the afternoon passed, and dark dropped, and no train brought Old Fireproof, I just turned to on rum. For all the other squadrons had got hold of how young Palliser had been prisoner, and come in stripped; and now where was Fighting D Squadron that never had a man taken prisoner? And the old hands of the squadron itself were coming to me and wanting to know how it could have happened, and him lying there white and sick under my blankets, till I sat down in front of my little shelter tent and swore I'd stiffen the next damned man that came near! But the squadron was good; it never tried to say that the lad hadn't been posted to D yet. It knew he was D, my own recruit, and it just said: "All right, you fellows; wait till the next fight. Then you A and B and C men will hear the same old thing—Fighting D first, and the rest nowhere."

'When it had got good and dark, and I knew no more trains could come in, and never thought of the armoured trains that come in any time they like, I turned to the young fellow and made him swear by all the gods that he wouldn't leave that night, and the

next thing I knew I was raging, challenging drunk down the other squadrons' lines, kicking their saddles about, and asking if there was half a man in all their lines to just come out and take me on. A squadron sergeant-major that was, doing that sort of thing in the middle of the camp for the night and the men to look at!

'And then—then out of the dark and the stars and the fires that were in my eyes came a voice, very slow, very quiet—the captain's voice. "Is it you—again? I did not think you would ever have broken your word."

'The shame on me! I wanted to drop—drop dead for ever; only the good gladness to have him back to set things right made me want to shake his hand off. And, while I stood dumb, he put his hand under my elbow again, as he'd done once before, and he led me away through the non-coms. the adjutant had sent to arrest me, and I kept the way straight across to my blankets where the lad was lying inside them, though the captain didn't know that, for he'd just got off the armoured train, and hadn't even been into the mess yet.

"Now you lie down," said the captain, "and you'll give me your word that you'll not stir out of your blankets till the morning." And he was pressing me with his hand to lie down.

'But I wouldn't lie down, for I was trying to pick out the best way to begin telling him about the lad, when all of a sudden there was a shuffle inside the shelter rig, and out up into the moonlight stood the young heart himself, naked again as he had been in the sunlight yesterday. I thought—well, I thought he'd gone mad.

'And he spoke. "This is me, sir"—and his voice was like a voice that's come with the tides across all the seas of sorrow—"this is how I came in yesterday when the Boers finished with me and let me go. They wouldn't shoot me." I had him fast by the wrist before he'd finished, but he only went on again: "No, you needn't. This is the captain, and I'm telling him the truth, so you can't hide it, and so he'll know just what I am."

'I might think he was mad, but Old Fireproof didn't. He always knows the heart of it when it's anything like that. He thinks every man's as fine as himself, and his thought always flies straight on the good line. "Ah! is it that?" he said, soft and low, gentle as if the lad had been a woman standing in sorrow before him. "You were prisoner, were you?" And with the thought of it he spread the cloak from his arm and put it quite round the boy, buttoning it at the throat and at the breast to warm him.

‘Then he turned to me. “Is he—is he a young brother of yours, sergeant-major? I don’t think I ever heard that you were married to have a son.”

“No, sir,” said I; “but if I ever had a son this would be him. And his heart’s broke because he was captured yesterday on a fool job this commandant would send them out on.”

“Ah,” said he again—sir, you should hear him say that “Ah.” The fellows know it—“Ah,” he said, and his two hands went out, one on the lad’s shoulder and one on his arm, and he stepped close up to him just like a father might have done. “I think I understand,” he whispered, and the heart of his heart was in the softness of his voice, till I heard the lad catch his breath as he stood.

‘The words came again, soft as the dark, “I think I understand”—and I knew the little smile that was on his face, though I couldn’t see it. No man that’s ever seen it forgets it, because it’s only for a man in trouble that smile comes out. And still once more a third time the words came out, like an echo for tenderness—“I understand.” Quiet came to me then. I knew that by that time the lad would be feeling just what Old Fireproof was—you don’t know about Old Fireproof, you just feel.

‘But the youngster couldn’t quite let himself go yet. “No, sir; you can’t understand a coward.”

“Well,” said the captain, speaking slow, and like as if it was a thing that was a bit curious, “I am not sure that I do, *quite*. It seems so strange a way, just to be eating and drinking and sleeping, and to have no more in life but that. It is such a poor little lot to have for all the trouble of living when you are always and all the time afraid unless you’re just at the elbow of a policeman. When one thinks of all there is in life, the honour and the content and the quiet, if one is in truth a man, and then tries to think of the poor coward, with no rest and no peace unless life is going along the same smooth line like a tramway track, why, it does seem something hard to understand. It must be a terrible life; poor devils, they ought to be sure of heaven when their time comes.”

‘That was Old Fireproof again, every word, for he was talking half to himself. There the lad had him laid out for him to see, clear through and through, right on his first meeting him; and his eyes must have widened as he stood and listened, because his heart was warming together again inside him. Only he would have the last, last shadow out.

“But, sir,” he said, “I hands’d-up the minute they shouted,

and there was only forty of them. You never did that. I've heard about you. You rode right up to hundreds of them, and while they all had their rifles ready, and were shouting, 'Hands-up!' you were just counting them and looking at the position. And then you just turned round and went back and told the general what was there."

"The captain nearly laughed. You could hear the smile in his voice. "Why, of course, that was the very thing I'd been sent to do. There wasn't time to scout the position, so it had to be done by reconnaissance like that. That was an open-eyed order, not just a casual happening like yours yesterday. No, no; you don't know what a coward is either, or you wouldn't feel like that. A coward wouldn't have stood up and talked as you've done just now. Above all, a coward couldn't have driven Sergeant-Major Hughes to break loose as he has done to-night. Did you think of it like that?"

"He had the lad there; he always has everybody like that, by just making them think another way. But he is a stubborn beggar is young Palliser. "He ought to have shot me yesterday," said he.

"Oh, he'd shoot you quick enough if you were a real coward and in action," smiled Old Fireproof. "But now, you get down into the blankets and we'll hear the whole thing. There's room for me inside, I think."

"So there we all got down under the shelter, the three of us lying on the blankets in the dark, the lad in the middle, and me speaking first, telling all about his enlisting. And when I'd told all about that, then the lad told all about the rest, the being captured, every last shameful word as he thought it.

"But, when he'd finished, Old Fireproof spoke, and I knew he was smiling quietly like a father all the while. "No, no. That is not it at all. You don't quite understand, and you'll be a deal older before you do. You see, it's that you'd been so long eating your heart out in Grahamstown, aching to get to the front, and all the while, day by day, the war was being finished, as you thought. And the Grahamstown regiments were doing such good work up here, and the young fellows you knew, and that weren't so much older than you, were getting their names into everybody's mouth; lots of them getting wounded and coming home convalescent, and lots more even getting killed, and then everybody so proud of their being Grahamstown men. And all that time you had to wait and count the days till you'd be old enough to be allowed to join in spite

of your mother's fears. And then, when you got into the Town Guard, you used to be ashamed of being only that, while the war might end any day, and you never have been in a battle, till at last you got up here.

"Well, and then you heard all these tales of the regiment, and you thought you couldn't afford to lose a minute or a single chance, and so you got on to that wood party, because the Boers might try to capture it.

"And that is how you got so far ahead of the rest, because the other fellows were only thinking of getting back safe, while you were thinking of getting up to the Boers. And when you rode up that little koppie, you weren't thinking of Boers being in such a small place when there were so much bigger koppies all about, and the veldt looked so empty. All your mind was hoping the Boers would come before you had to go back, and thinking how you just would fight. And then—then it was forty rifles levelled at you, and one long roar of 'Hands up!'—I've heard it—and the thing was done before you knew it. And isn't that really just the way it was?" ended he; and he put his hand on the lad's shoulder in the dark.

'The lad had to catch a big breath and hold it; everything was so wonderfully clear and true. "But isn't that being a coward, sir?" said he.

'Old Fireproof laughed, low and soft in the dark. "Son, son, that's anything but a coward. That's a young fellow that's learning his lesson. That's one that's never going to go up a koppie again—no, nor even over the plainest, flattest veldt—but he'll be looking for Boers in every yard of the ground. He's going to be looking for every possible place that a Boer could hide in at all, and to be studying how to find that Boer out in time and turn the tables on him. He'll be expecting a shot at every stride, and thinking of what's the best way in and the best way out of every position, and what is just the thing to be done if Boers turn out to be here or there or anywhere. And all the time he'll be looking right and left and behind and before, keeping touch with the rest if he's not alone, or, if he's alone, then keeping a plan and a line of country in his head, ready if he should be put to it to run for it. And all the time he'll be learning, learning, learning, both from things he's seen a hundred times, and things he never knew existed. And that's the man no money can pay for; it's the man the women should pray for, and it most surely is the man his officers will work to death—as you'll find out when you come to be a non-com., and

have men under you and begin to look for such men till your heart aches. They're gold, just gold, such men are."

"I laughed to myself, for I could feel in my heart the lad was fairly cornered with wonder of new things. "If I could go out with you to-morrow, sir, and do something," said he. "Or if I hadn't belonged to your squadron that never had a man captured before. They say I've broken your luck."

"My luck!" said Old Fireproof, half snorting. "I can't get the beggars to thank Christ for that; they keep talking of *my* luck. It will do the beggars good. We might ha' gone on, and some day the whole squadron be captured. So, now, you give the sergeant-major your word that you'll play the game by him, and to-morrow he's to bring you over as my orderly."

"I will, sir; I will," said the lad, so earnest you could hear his voice ringing with it.

"And that earnestness touched Old Fireproof in the true spot; it always does. "Thank you," said he, quite as earnestly too. "Good-night," he went on, getting up to go. But I thought he'd say something more, and he did. "Don't trouble; don't fret any more," he said, and then—just as he was going away—"Christ be with you," he ended softly.

"That was him, that's him always. That's the gentleman in him; he's never afraid to let you see inside him; he knows he's a gentleman through to his heart, and so he's never ashamed to speak as if we were gentlemen, too, the same sort as himself. And that's why it's so good to hear him swearing in a fight—you can see he means it so. How he does shout it out if there's any need for it, and how he does make jokes when the fight is steady and getting hotter. And so he went away that night, and left us two lying there in the dark.

"When he was quite gone I spoke to the lad. "Now what do you think? Didn't I tell you?"

"No," says he, "you didn't. You couldn't—nor anybody else. But you just wait till we march—that's all."

"And so we went to sleep—no handcuffs that night."

II.

The sergeant-major had paused for some little while, like one who muses over what once moved him deeply. Quietly as I could I poured fresh coffee for him, and laid the tobacco nearer his elbow.

Yet the action roused him from his reverie. 'Sir, thank you,' he said; and then in the next breath plunged on:

'You see, sir, next morning, when I woke up, I saw the lad was almost cheerful, and I begun to think the thing was done with, except, of course, I'd have to watch him from being too reckless in the next fight. But while he was fetching water for us to wash, one swine of an undesirable in C Squadron—his captain got him sent down as an undesirable the very next day—this swine must begin to jeer the lad again, and the lad wasn't man enough yet to hold up against it. He came back as grey and as sick-looking as he well could be, and the coffee wouldn't hearten him.

'Then I was sent for to orderly-room tent about my last night's doing, and when I got back he was worse, for he'd heard all the fellows saying that I was bound to be broke, and one or two of the scallywags weren't sorry. But I told him that Old Fireproof had got the thing put off for twenty-four hours, and by that time he'd have talked Old Rostron over. I didn't tell him that I'd begged Old Fireproof to let me revert to the ranks, since I wasn't fit to be a sergeant-major after last night; because the captain had just fired me out of the tent at that. He'd got all the dashed troopers he wanted, he said, and I was just trying to shirk out of work. The work had got to be done, and I'd got to do it, and in between I could think over what I'd done. That's the worst of his way of punishing a man. He makes a man think for himself, and then leaves him to have to keep on thinking, and it makes a fellow feel so blue miserable. If he'd broke me, that would have squared the bill, and I wouldn't have felt that I owed anything. And the men would be worse for me to handle now because they knew I ought to be broke.

'Well, when the lad heard me say that it was put off for twenty-four hours, he looked at me and took a big breath and said nothing, and I thought he'd taken hope that it would come out all right. And he didn't say much while he straightened up the kit, and he didn't say much as I took him over and left him by the captain's Cape cart to do duty as orderly. But that afternoon, when I had to get the captain to sign some papers, there I found the two of them down in the spruit, Old Fireproof making mud pies, as he called it, and the young fellow looking on with all his eyes and all his soul as well.

'Old Fireproof looked up at me. "Only some signatures, sir, that will wait," said I; and he went on with the game. And I looked too, and I listened, and there he was, laying out that whole

piece of country where the lad had been captured ; building it up and laying it out with the mud and the sand of the spruit.

"I'm showing him the truth," said Old Fireproof. "He thinks the place he was captured in was just a koppie in the veldt. I'm showing him that it's only part of a deal more veldt and a deal more koppies. I'm showing him that God made all the countries out of smaller pieces of country, if you catch my meaning, and that when you come to any particular spot it's always part of one of those pieces of country, and that you've got to look at the whole piece first, and then at the parts of it. He's seeing now that his koppie and his flat were only part of the whole Schoonfontein country, and he's dimly beginning to see why men in that piece of country must make certain moves, and do certain things, all because the Schoonfontein country was built just a certain way." That's Old Fireproof all over ; he always goes right down to the foundations of things, and makes you see things as clear as daylight, building them up in your mind.

'And he was saying to the lad : "Now, suppose you were a Boer commandant, and had a little commando in that Schoonfontein country, and your business was to watch the British here in Vanden-burg, to cut off everything you could in the way of cattle or men, and generally to see that they didn't stick their noses outside their lines except in force—now what would be the way you'd do that ?"

'The lad looked straight at him with his eyes wide open at such a simple question. "Why, sir, I'd first set a lookout post on this highest koppie here," and he touched the model of the spitz-kop that stands up over all else of that country. "And then I'd keep all the men in any of these kloofs and little places where the feed was good for the horses, and where they'd be well hidden. Then, when the lookout reported anything coming that I was strong enough to take on, why, I'd gather the men and push forward to the best place farthest in front—to this koppie here," and then he stopped, and went as red as fire ; for the koppie he'd put his finger on was the very same koppie he'd been captured on.

"Ah, now you see," spoke Old Fireproof, smiling and keeping on smiling till the lad was forced to smile too. "Now do you see how easy—how wonderfully, shamefully, marvellously easy—war is if you only think a bit and keep on thinking, and still thinking, and always act on your thinking ? It's because people will keep imagining that war is just shooting and fighting that things get into such a mess. War is studying first, studying second, studying last, and all the time ; but studying about the right things, and then

acting on what you see should be done. Then the fighting will come in its right and proper place, and be handled as it ought to be; that's war."

'The lad looked fairly dazed, and his eyes begun to spread a bit, as if he was watching daylight sweep the darkness off a wide piece of country in his front. And he was, for he'd been reading the papers so much about war, and reading books so much about V.C.'s and whatnot, that it fairly left him stranded to hear how clear and strong the right thing was under it all. "And now," went on Old Fireproof, "supposing I sent you out, after this, in front of another small party, of your own squadron, how would you go about that piece of country this time?"

'The lad answered straight off. "I'd go this way," said he, showing the line with his finger. "I'd go round there till I could see if there was any sign of horses or men or anything in the koppie. And then, if that was clear, I'd draw across here, till I could look in there, from out here. And then I'd stop, because the wood party wouldn't be coming out any farther, and if the Boers came out at all they'd have to come just my way."

'Fireproof looked up at me and grinned. "Well, sergeant-major, what about him for next-for-corporal, as soon as he's grown a bit more moustache?"

'I laughed, and the lad laughed a bit too, shy-like; and the captain went on: "But now, at night—supposing you were the Boer commandant again; how would you go on at night—remembering that the khakies—the British, that is—might pop out any night from here and try to snap you at dawn?"

"Well, sir, of course I'd have to draw back at night as far as I could without going clean off the ground. I wouldn't camp at Schoonfontein farm there, because that's just where the khakies would look for me. Nor I wouldn't go into these three kloofs, nor on this krantz-kop, because they are bad to get away from if you're attacked all round. I'd either go right out in the flat veldt where there's nothing to guide the khakies, or I'd get on one of these easy ridges where I could mount and go if we had to, and where it's not easy to be surrounded."

'The captain nodded to him. "You've hit it to a hair. You see, now you know exactly what Commandant Ferreira and his burghers are doing every day and every night. Why! it would be quite easy, wouldn't it, for one of our Kaffirs to go out there afoot in the night, and get into the koppies and hide snug somewhere, and watch them all day?"

"It would," said the lad, his face quickening.

"And if he watched them close, and saw where they drew to sleep, why, it would be the simplest thing in the world for him to steal down on them in the dark and bring away a rifle and bandolier and a horse for yours, wouldn't it?"

"I can," said the lad. And as soon as he said it, I looked at Old Fireproof, but he wouldn't look at me. I could see at last what he'd been doing all the time, and now he'd done it. "Well," said he to the lad, "there's the Schoonfontein country in model, if you want to look at it. I must go over now with the sergeant-major about the signatures." And the lad wouldn't look at me either; and so we two went and left him there, staring and thinking.

"But, sir——" said I to Old Fireproof, as soon as we got away a bit.

"No, sergeant-major. I'm afraid it's no use talking. The thing can't be helped. You've got to let him go through with it; there was no other way. One thing—when he comes back with the rifle the squadron will be the stronger by another *man*; you know what I mean."

"I did know, only I couldn't help thinking of other things. "But, sir, if he's killed?" said I; and I couldn't say another word.

"Well, he'll have been killed trying, and that's the only thing that matters. If he's killed he'll know that at once. That's the best of death; as soon as one is killed one will see the real things from the trumpery things." Sir, I think sometimes Old Fireproof would like to be killed, just so as to get to know for himself.

"But I was thinking of the lad's mother and sisters, that had looked at me with such eyes when I let him come, only I couldn't get the right words to say so. And Old Fireproof must have known that too, for he went on: "As to his mother and sisters, remember, he stands to be killed just as much within the fifth mile of the next trek as he does to-night. Don't forget that Forrest had his neck broken by a box of biscuits off a waggon the last time we were in this very camp. And which would his people rather—have him dead bravely, or living in misery?"

"Neither, sir," said I. And he smiled.

"Well, just as we were tying up the horses for the evening feed, back came the lad, with a smile on his face that I couldn't stand at all, because I knew there'd be no use talking to him either, any more than to Old Fireproof, when that look was on him. And he'd hardly a word to say, though he took a good meal with me; for I'd kept out of the sergeants' mess till my case should be tried.

Then he put six biscuits in his pocket and filled my water-bottle and put it on, and sat down to wait for dark. "You'll take my rifle and bandolier, I suppose?" said I.

"No," said he; "no rifle till I get one from them. Besides, I've got this," and he showed me a revolver—Old Fireproof's revolver, that he never carries himself. "And this too," he went on, and I saw in a wink what that was; it was a "sandbag," a thing that thieves use in America when they knock a man down to rob him. I dunno who gave him that, though it was just as like as not to be Old Fireproof. "Anything's a good weapon if a good man's using it," I heard him say once; "and some things are a lot better for certain sorts of work."

"After that I could see it would be no use to argue with the lad. So I started to tell him he must do this and do that, and be sure of this and t'other. "Oh," said he, "I've been talking with Old Fireproof this three hours past, and he's been telling me everything—just what to do, no matter what they do, and things they'd never think of. And yet he says it's sure to be something quite simple that'll happen, if it does happen, and something just as simple that'll pull me through. By Jove, what he does know about it! You fellows don't half know him; not half."

"Don't we?" said I. "We know one thing. We know if he had us out, and hell was in front of him, and he thought that was the right spot to camp, he'd take us in and clear it out, and say, 'Pitch the lines just here, and turn the horses out that way to graze.' And there we'd camp, and there the horses would graze on the veldt of hell, and the devil and all his commando would have to lie out on the koppies and watch us, and catch colds, till we trekked again and left it to them once more. Don't we know? Don't think you're the only man he's set on his feet again. Some of us were worse than you because they hadn't a backbone in them till he put one in. And yet we're old Fighting D and all; don't forget."

"And I'll be D, too, when I come back," said he. Then it was dark, and he got up. "Good-bye, Tom," said he.

"I'll good-bye you in a minute," said I. "I'll see you out of camp at any rate." So we started.

"Not that way—this way," said he; and he began to lay off the reasons for it, till I could see that Old Fireproof had gone over the whole thing with him, right from leaving the squadron lines. That helped me a lot, and as we went, I prayed and I cursed the lad to remember and do just what the captain had told him.

"Do you know what's the chief thing he told me?" answered he.

"His motto, I'll bet," said I. "Better death than fear."

"Well, yes, that too. But the chief thing he said was I must think all the time, and every time, about the best way of the work I was doing. Then I'd never be taken by surprise—and it's surprise that does one."

"That's it," said I. "Good-night now. But if you come back killed—you just dare to, that's all." And I stopped, as if I didn't know what I wouldn't do to him if he did.

'And that made him laugh, which was what I wanted, just to ease the strain on him like, for he'd screwed himself up a bit too tight. And so he went on into the dark.'

(To be concluded.)

A Port of Stranded Pride.

NOT from the railway, not even through the grim old Land Gate should the stranger approach Rye for the first time. The ideal way is, unfortunately, rather impracticable; but it is across the marshes from the south that one should have the first sight of Rye, rising above the green, water-threaded levels in her most true and pregnant aspect—for this little fighting port ever turned her face seawards, whence the enemy came. Red-roofed, the town clusters and climbs to the great red-roofed church—almost cathedral-like in its size and beauty—which crowns the very summit of Rye rock. There is a sense of completeness about Rye. The Ancient Town is small, but sufficient to itself, as though still shut in from too much contact with the modern world by the invisible presence of the walls that have long since fallen.

But if the walls have fallen—those walls which Richard Lion-heart first authorised and considered ‘the greatest safeguard which could be made in these parts for the security of our kingdom’—and if only one of Rye’s five gates remains, a still older relic of the feudal past is standing in all its rude Norman strength. No one who has once seen Ypres Tower can forget it, set squarely upon the angle of the cliff, the keep of the ancient castle of William de Ypres, Earl of Kent, and long ago the last retreat of the men of Rye on the numerous occasions when the enemy sacked the town. Ypres Tower—it is simplified into ‘Wiper’s’ by the Sussex tongue—was built some time in the twelfth century; and, with the exception of Dover Castle, is the oldest fortification now existing in any of the Cinque Ports. Grim and blind stands old Ypres in a corner of the Gun Garden, stranded from a fiercer age than ours, and quite unsoftened by all the centuries that have passed over its head. It has to the full that quality of awful aloofness which some old buildings possess. Its narrow windows no longer look outward, as do the windows of inhabited houses; instead, they are turned inwards, gazing into ‘the dark backward and abysm of time,’ blind to all the present.

Yet, in spite of grey and solemn Ypres Tower, in spite of the dark-faced old Grammar School in the High Street, more like a prison than anything else, the prevailing note of Rye is a warm gaiety and cheerfulness. It has all the brightness of a mediæval missal painting in which blithe reds and greens are used with a generous brush. Hardly anywhere in Rye will you see a squalid and unkempt house. Most of the houses in the square round the church, in Watchbell Street, and many in Mermaid Street, are small—some of them quite tiny, like the quaint little pointed store-house set in its toy garden; but, big or little, they are all as fresh as spotless paint, shining windows, and polished brass door-knockers can make them. As Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer says in his delightful book on *The Cinque Ports*, Rye is 'always fit to be seen. Any other town has its moments. . . . Rye never poses. It is for ever sincere. It is mediævally picturesque, because, like Topsy, it grew so.'

In the whole of Sussex it would be difficult to find anything more quaintly attractive than Mermaid Street, so steep and narrow, with grass growing between its irregular cobble-stones. It takes its name from the Mermaid Inn, a beautiful old timbered and tiled house, rich in dark oak and carved stone chimneypieces, much frequented by artists and golfers. As far back as can be traced there has always been a Mermaid Inn at Rye, and when it is remembered that John Fletcher, the Elizabethan dramatist, was born in Rye in 1576, it seems to bring the whole place into quite close connection with Shakespeare and the more famous Mermaid Tavern in Bread Street. But the finest house in Mermaid Street is not the Mermaid Inn—which shows a comparatively modern front to the street, and keeps its best treasures of oak, and plaster, and diamond-paned windows at the back—but the Old Hospital, as it is called, which once belonged to the well-known Rye family of Jeake. It is an almost perfect specimen of a timbered house, with three pointed, overhanging gables, steep, tiled roof, and charming leaded windows, whose diamond panes bulge in and out with age and catch the light at all angles. There are other charming houses and quaint cottages in Mermaid Street, many of them wreathed in vines and creepers; and the whole effect, as one looks up or down the street, at the time-softened red walls and the vista of climbing roofs, steep-angled and ruddy against the sky, is so absolutely as it should be that one wonders why houses are ever built on the level.

So mediæval is the aspect of Mermaid Street that at night one

almost expects to meet the constable going his rounds as he did in 1575, according to the town records of Rye, 'to see lanthorne and candle hung out by such as are of ability to maintain the same.'

At the top of Mermaid Street, round the corner into West Street, Mr. Henry James has a house of great dignity and retirement. It only presents a shoulder to the gaze of the passer-by, and turns its fine front to a high-walled garden. Rumour has it that here once lived a 'flame' of the 'First Gentleman of Europe.'

Watchbell Street is one of the oldest in Rye; it overhangs Watchbell Cliff, and took its name from the fact that a bell hung at the west end, which was rung in times of danger to summon the stout hearts of Rye to the defence of their beloved little town. The old fighting thrill still hangs about the name, but to-day Watchbell Street has an aspect of undisturbed content; it seems to have folded its hands and gone to sleep, while the moss creeps over the cobbles. Long ago two batteries of brass cannon stood at the open end over Watchbell Cliff, and when they were removed, in 1798, five 24-pounders, taken at the battle of Camperdown, in which many Rye men fought, took their place. But now brass cannon and Dutch 24-pounders have alike disappeared, and in their stead is a little platform where one can sit and watch the sun sink behind Winchelsea and the mists come up over the marshes.

But there is an even better spot from which to study the wide-spreading marshland, a favourite resort of the town, under the very shadow of 'Wiper's Tower,' called the Battery or Gun Garden. From here one looks down the edge of the cliff to a line of black, tarred boat-buildings below, and on the slips can be seen one vessel nearly finished, and the bare, strong keel and ribs of another. Some years ago shipbuilding flourished at Rye, Sussex oak, the best in the Kingdom, being close at hand. But this industry has to a large extent declined, though smacks are still built at the Rock Channel Shipyard—a yard which has a reputation among fishermen. On the level marsh, half-way to the line of sea lying like a narrow blue riband upon the horizon, is grey old Camber Castle, built by Henry VIII. On the extreme right is a glimpse of the wooded steep of Winchelsea, and on the other hand

The doubling Rother crawls
To find the fickle tide,

past plain little Camber Town, which, with its lighthouse and cluster of ships and cottages, is now the harbour of Rye. Dimly

on the sea edge can be seen the smoke and sails of the vessels that no longer come near this stranded port ; but, as if in compensation, the wide stretch of level marshland has something of the immensity and simplicity of the horizon as one knows it from the deck of a vessel in mid-ocean. Sitting in the Gun Garden on a work-a-day one can hear the people of this indomitable port cheerfully hammering away at the building of ships. If the sea will not come to them they will go to the sea, as they do by painfully sailing and tacking down the muddy, winding reaches of the Rother. The Rother, being tidal, changes its aspect continually, as all such rivers do—at the ebb it is low and flat in colour, but at the flow comes up gay and blue from the sea. There is a certain fascination in wandering about the Strand Quay and the Town Salts ; in walking on narrow dykes raised above the muddy flats and looking at ancient stakes stuck upright in the mud, which perhaps represent all that is left of the many desperate schemes for creating a harbour and bringing back the sea to Rye. One of these attempted harbours was called 'The Wish' ; but it was a wish that never reached fruition. And now all that is left of the proud ships that once lay at anchor beneath Rye rock is a red-sailed barge or two at the Strand Quay, and perhaps a small and rusty-funnelled steamer ; while stranded on the mud are the hollow ribs and decaying sides of ancient boats—the glory has departed.

In order to appreciate the full charm of Rye, you have to get outside it and survey the little town as a whole, from the marsh levels, where the round grey keep and outer walls of Camber Castle lie lonely and dismantled. At the time Camber was built by Henry VIII. it stood upon a sand-spit, something like Chesil Beach, which stretched from Winchelsea to east of Rye ; but within fifty years of its building the castle, which had stood upon the sea edge, was stranded several hundred yards from high-water mark, while the shallows behind were steadily filling up with alluvial soil brought down by the Brede, the Rother, and Tillingham brook. So long ago was it that the sea deserted Rye ! But as one looks at the sheep peacefully cropping the Pett Level, at the exquisite pale shimmer of the marsh grass against a blue sky, with Rye standing up redly beyond, there seem to be compensations even for the regretted departure of the sea. The pathway leading back to Rye runs by little rhines and water-cuttings filled with purple flowering reeds, whose sharp, sword-like leaves whisper against each other—a sound in harmony with the silence, the low voice of the wind and distant sea, the rare cry of a seabird, and

the feeling of the past that hangs over the sun-washed marshes stretching up to the rock of Rye.

There is an extraordinary clarity of air here in fine weather. The town stands out with the fineness of an etching ; but when the mists come up from the sea there are times when Rye seems to float in air, with a most magical effect. When the mists turn the marshland to a semblance of the unstable sea, Rye once more looks the ancient port that left her mark so deep on history. In those days we were the 'shut island of the north,' and Rye, with Winchelsea and the Five Ports, one of our guarded and assaulted gateways. Sack and reprisal, reprisal and sack, was the order in the fierce, early days of Rye's history. The town was taken and retaken by the French, who spared none. Soon after the death of Edward III. they again ravaged Rye with fire and sword. 'They, within five hours,' says the historian Stow, 'brought it wholly into ashes, with the church that then was there, of a wonderful beauty, conveying away four of the richest of the town, and slaying sixty-six, left not above eight in the town.' And, besides war, plague and fire swept often through the streets of Rye ; but, as Mr. Hueffer says, the town 'had an incredible hold upon life and its beloved rock.' An indomitable temper and a readiness to believe that to-morrow would be better than to-day were necessities of life in a Cinque Port. It was that temper which cheerfully rebuilt Rye from its frequent ashes and raised up the great church that now crowns the rock, and deserves, not less than in Jeake's time, his praise as being 'the goodliest edifice of the kind in Kent and Sussex, the cathedrals excepted.' In autumn it is of a warmth and richness of colour unusual in churches, for the far-spreading roof is red-tiled like the humblest Rye cottage, while the stone walls hide their greyness under a mantle of crimson creeper. The massive dignity of the whole building can be best appreciated when one is outside Rye, for the houses of the enclosing square nestle up as though some power of comfort and protection resided in the church and rob it of the space its size requires. The northern side of the church-tower is adorned by an old and curious clock—supposed to be the oldest going in England—which tradition claims as the gift of Queen Elizabeth to the town that she smilingly christened 'Rye Royal' on one of her long-past progresses. The clock is remarkable by reason of two gilt 'quarter-boys,' who strike the quarters with a thin, clear note upon two bells, and between them is a kind of shield bearing the solemn words : 'For our time is a very shadow that passeth away.' Just inside the

great doorway below is a long, gilt pendulum that swings slowly from side to side above the heads of all who enter, measuring the minutes that now pass so quietly in Rye.

Elizabeth must have had a liking for the 'ancient town.' The year after the Armada she presented it with 'six brass guns beautifully ornamented with the arms of Spain, which stood on the spot called the Green.'

Rye ships and Rye men took part in the defeat of the Armada ; but that battle practically marks the end of Rye's fighting history as a member of the great confederation of the Cinque Ports. Thenceforward the defence of the Kingdom fell more and more to the charge of the Royal Navy, as it is constituted to-day, and the valiant cogs, crayers, snakes, and cockboats of the Cinque Ports, that had represented the might of England on the seas, passed out of sight and memory. But, instead of recalling the melancholy years in which the sea receded steadily, one prefers to look backward to the fierce fighting times long before the keels of the Armada vessels were laid down, long before Camber Castle was built—the years when the second Winchelsea was newly set upon its hill by Edward I. Those were the great days of the sister ports of 'Rie' and 'Wincenese.' Who that has read it can forget Froissart's engaging account of the battle of l'Espagnols-sur-Mer, fought off Winchelsea in 1350, when England first defeated Spain upon the sea ? It is too long to quote in full, but a few sentences are not to be resisted. The Spaniards, says the chronicler of this 'gentle and joyous' battle, 'thought and held themselves strong enough to fight upon the sea the King of England and his power ; and, in this mind, came they swimming before the wind.' Edward III. stood upon the deck of his ship 'dressed in a black jake of velvet, and wore upon his head a cap of black beaver, which well became him.' He had put a guard in 'the top-castle of his ship,' and suddenly this guard cried out : 'Ho ! I see one come a-sailing ; and I think it is a ship of Spain.' Asked if he saw more ships he answered : 'Yes, I see one, and then two, and then three, and then four' ; and then cried, when he saw the great fleet : 'I see so many, if God aids me, that I cannot number them.'

This being the sort of odds that England prefers upon the sea, the two fleets closed and the battle began—a fierce and desperate battle, where ship grappled with ship, and 'the king's ship was so astonished that its seams opened and it leaked.' 'In the end,' says Froissart, 'the day fell to the English, and the Spaniards there lost fourteen ships. The rest passed on and saved themselves.

When they had all gone, and the said king had no one with whom to fight, they sounded with their trumpets the retreat. So they went their way towards England, and took land at Rye and at Wincenese, a little after the day was done.'

The poor Queen had watched the battle from afar: 'She had had great anguish of heart that day through for fear of those Spaniards: for, at that place of the shores of England there are mountains from which they had seen the strife: for it had been a clear day and a day of fine weather.'

But now, even on a day of clearest weather, one can no longer fearfully watch battles afar off; where the ships of England and Spain fought, in the curve of Winchelsea bay, the quiet sheep now crop the marsh grass, and the cloud shadows shift and play across the levels to the sea. But still the stranded port of Rye remains to vivify history. None who have truly felt the spell of the place can leave it without at heart repeating the words that end its old *Custumal*: 'God save Englonde and the Towne of Rye!'

E. HALLAM MOORHOUSE.

The Vagaries of Tod and Peter.

THE SENDING.

WHEN the time came for those twins, Tod and Peter, to go to public school, their mother seriously considered the advisability of putting them into different 'houses.' At first she thought that perhaps it might make for righteousness to separate them. But, on hearing the subject mooted, they so whole-heartedly fell in with her opinion, rapturously reviewing the possibility of 'changing houses' whenever they felt so inclined, that she instantly dismissed the idea; rightly coming to the conclusion that if their extraordinary resemblance was a cause of general muddle and mystification while they were together, it would become confusion worse confounded were they separated. Moreover, she reflected that even schoolmasters are men of like passions with ourselves, and charitably refrained from adding to such a one's already heavy burden by a separate superintendence of the twins.

Tod and Peter, whose mental attitude was always that 'all is for the best in the best possible of worlds,' decided that after all propinquity has its advantages, and rejoiced that family tradition sent them into a house whose head was proverbially the 'slackest old slackster in the whole school.' A dreamy, mild-mannered, gentlemanly man that master, who left the management of the 'house' entirely to an extremely energetic wife and a 'young brusher' ('brusher' is the familiar term for master in that school) whose prowess in the playing fields was only equalled by his extreme fussiness where rules of his own making were concerned.

'Not a bad chap,' the twins decided after their first week; 'but a bit like the German Emperor, you know—wants things all his own way. Still, if you humour the youth, he's all right.'

So successfully did they humour the 'young brusher' in question that for the first month all went smoothly, and the house-master himself, a gentle optimist, ever ready to believe the best of boy-

humanity, really thought that the 'character' that had preceded them from preparatory school was perhaps over-emphasised.

Their late head-master, while giving them full credit for general integrity and fair abilities, had, in mercy to his brethren of the craft, pointed out that they were ever 'ready to join in frivolity and insubordination, when not under my own eye.' They had to work, for they were on the Modern Side, and destined for the army, and in that particular school, not the wildest shirker in creation can escape the argus eye of the 'head of the Modern,' or the retribution, swift, sharp, and sure, that follows any such line of conduct.

But, bless you! ordinary work and games, at which both were good, never found sufficient scope for the energies of Tod and Peter, and by the time the first month was up they began their tricks.

One Mr. Neatby, M.A., taught the twins chemistry. Not that they went to him together. They were in different, though, as far as work went, parallel forms, and finding that their systematic 'changing' was never so much as suspected, and therefore carried with it no spice of danger or adventure, they gave it up, devoting their energies to the tormenting of Mr. Neatby, who had by his severity incurred their august displeasure.

Mr. Neatby was tall, severe, and dignified. He really liked his subject, but felt, as a rule, little affection for his pupils. Nevertheless, he was conscientious to the last degree in the discharge of his duties. His way of expressing himself was what Peter called 'essayish'; he gave lines lavishly, and had but little mercy on the reckless breaker of test-tubes. He did not rant, or stamp, or call people by opprobrious names, as did many better-loved masters. He was always cold, cutting, and superior. But the thing about him that most excited Peter's animosity was his necktie.

'He wears revolting, jerry-built, Judas-like ties,' the indignant Peter proclaimed to an admiring audience of lower boys; 'ties that slip down and show a beastly, brassy stud. His socks, too, leave much to be desired; in fact, his extremities altogether are such as betoken a bad, hard heart.'

'Let me see,' said Tod softly, looking up from a book he was reading; 'do you think that a *sending* might soften the man's hard heart?'

At this particular stage of the twins' career, Mr. Kipling was the god of their idolatry, and both of them had 'gloated,' even in the manner of the immortal 'Stalky' himself, over the vengeance of Dana Dan.

'It might be managed,' Peter answered, thoughtfully scratching his smooth chin; 'but then again, it may be close-time for kittens just at present; don't they generally bloom in the spring?'

'There's always plenty of kittens, you juggins,' ejaculated a prosaic friend. 'Why, when I was down at the riding-school this morning, there was a cat with six in an empty loose-box; they'll have to drown five of 'em, they told me. 'D' your people want one or what?'

'I want one,' Peter rejoined excitedly; 'not one, but five, to give to a dear friend.'

'Shouldn't think he'd be your dear friend long.'

'Oh, yes, he will. He's an S.P.C.K., or whatever it is. He's awfully profane—humane, I mean.'

'Well,' said the other boy, still unconvinced; 'you can ask about 'em when you go for your lesson to-morrow morning. They weren't half bad little beasts, but I shouldn't advise you to give your friend more than one at a time, anyhow.'

Both Tod and Peter went twice a week to the riding-school in the town, as they were both destined for cavalry. Every underling about the place knew them well, and liked them. Their father had lived in the town during his last leave, jobbed his horses at the riding-master's stables, and had himself assisted at the lessons of elder brothers of Tod and Peter.

Now, there was at the school a certain Figgins, a generally handy man, or rather boy, who worshipped the ground the twins walked upon; and after their next lesson they and Figgins might have been seen holding long and earnest parley in the loose-box containing the cat and kittens.

The twins laughed uproariously all the way home, and just as they reached the house, Peter remarked: 'I hate anything dead. Figgins has promised not one of 'em shall be drowned, and when they're fit to be moved, he'll tell old White he's found good homes for the lot. And then—and then, Tod, my boy! our dear teacher shall have 'em alive, "alive, all alive, oh!—alive, all alive, oh!" and Peter burst into song in the exuberance of his joy.

Mr. Neatby lived in lodgings within a convenient distance of the school. He was therefore spared any intercourse with the boys after school hours, and usually spent his evenings in correcting innumerable marble-boarded exercise-books, containing chemistry notes. He was so engaged one evening about nine o'clock, when his landlady entered the room and laid a square parcel on the table at his elbow.

He finished correcting the book he had in hand, and took another, when his attention was arrested by an indescribable sound.

Mr. Neatby lifted his head and gazed about the room. 'Could it be a mouse under the skirting-board?' he wondered. Then half unconsciously his eyes fell on the parcel his landlady had brought into the room. It was an oblong cardboard box, about the size of an ordinary shoe-box. But, although tied up with string, it was not wrapped in paper, and, on looking at it more closely, Mr. Neatby discovered that the top was riddled with small holes.

Had it been summer, he, being something of a naturalist, would have at once concluded that someone had sent him some rare caterpillars, but what caterpillars are to be found in November?

He drew the parcel towards him, and there arose that curious sound again, louder and more insistent. He hastily cut the string and removed the lid of the box, and inside, reposing on a nest of hay, lay a very young and mewey kitten. A kitten who most evidently was homesick and aggrieved at being reft from the maternal bosom. A sprawly, squirmy, noisy kitten, that immediately proceeded to climb out of the box and crawl uncertainly towards Mr. Neatby's blotting-pad, where it collapsed into a dismal little heap, mewling louder than ever.

'There must be some mistake,' muttered Mr. Neatby, flushed and perturbed. 'No one would send *me* a kitten; that stupid woman must have made some muddle or other,' and he arose hastily and rang the bell.

He so rarely rang his bell after his modest supper had been cleared away that Mrs. Vyner, his landlady, had given up expecting him to do so, and had on this occasion 'just stepped out,' as she would have put it, to see a neighbour.

Mr. Neatby rang, and rang in vain, finally so far departing from his decorously distant demeanour as to go to the top of the kitchen stairs and shout. But the faint mewling of the kitten was the only answer to his outcries, and baffled and annoyed he returned to his sitting-room to find that the kitten had upset the red ink over Tod's chemistry notes, which, in company with many others, lay open on the table, and was feebly attempting to lap it up.

'Poor little thing; it's hungry,' he thought to himself. And being, indeed, as Peter said, a very humane man, he lifted it from the table, and went to his sideboard to see if he could find any milk. He did find some in the cupboard underneath, where it had

no business to be, and pouring some into a saucer, laid it on the floor beside the kitten, who proceeded to refresh itself with commendable promptitude.

Then, as his landlady still made no appearance, Mr. Neatby bethought him of looking at the parcel to see whether the kitten had been left at the wrong house. But no; attached to the string was a label, clearly addressed in a flowing, clerkly hand, 'S. S. Neatby, Esq., M.A.,' followed by his address, accurate as to number, street, and even town.

Once more he sat down in his chair, and leant his head on his hand to think, when he perceived, tucked into the hay at one side of the box, a card, and drew it forth hastily; a plain glazed visiting-card on which was inscribed the words 'From a grateful friend,' in the same excellent handwriting as the label.

Mr. Neatby blushed, and looked guiltily at the happily supping kitten. In addition to being humane, Mr. Neatby was also charitable, and there were many poor who had reason to be grateful to him. But as he always gave alms through a third person, and was one of those modest people who take care that their left hand knows not what the right hand doeth, he felt quite upset.

Presently he heard his landlady and her niece come in, and rang again.

'Who brought this box, Mrs. Vyner?' he asked, holding it up towards her.

'I can't say, sir, I'm sure. It was dark when I answered the door, and a young man—leastways, I think 'e was young—simply give it into my 'ands and ran down the steps again. I 'eld it under the gas in the 'all, sir, and read the label, as it was for you right enough, so I brings it in and lays it down without never interruptin' you sir, like you said.'

'*There was a kitten in that box,*' Mr. Neatby said solemnly, in such a tone as might have announced some national calamity.

'Sakes alive! you don't say so, sir,' cried Mrs. Vyner in great excitement; 'shall you keep it, sir?'

'I don't know yet,' Mr. Neatby said gravely; 'it must stay here for to-night, anyway.'

'It's a pretty little thing, sir,' said the landlady, stooping down to look at it where it lay basking in the heat of the fire. 'Twould be company like for you, wouldn't it, sir?'

'Hadn't it better go with you to the kitchen for to-night, Mrs. Vyner?' Mr. Neatby asked persuasively, and Mrs. Vyner, with many protestations of wonder, gathered up the kitten into her

apron and departed to the lower regions, where she informed the niece who lived with her that their lodger 'adn't spoken so many words to 'er never before, no, not in a month of Sundays.'

Mr. Neatby threw the box into his capacious waste-paper basket, but he put the card and label carefully away in one of the pigeon-holes of his desk.

Next day, on his return from morning school, he found a white cardboard hat-box, big enough to contain the most umbrageous *matinée* hat ever worn, set right in the middle of his table, and he felt distinctly annoyed. His landlady followed him into the sitting-room to lay lunch, and he, pointing to the offending box, said coldly, 'I must ask you not to leave your parcels in my room, Mrs. Vyner.'

Mrs. Vyner bridled, and seizing the box, held it out towards him, remarking aggrievedly: 'If so be as you refers to this 'ere, sir, I must 'ast *you* to look 'oo it's addressed to. It's put plain enough for you, sir.'

'But I assure you,' Mr. Neatby cried, recoiling from the proffered hat-box, 'that I haven't ordered a hat of any kind.'

'Any'ow,' said Mrs. Vyner scornfully; 'I don't suppose, sir, as you'd order your 'ats from Madam Looeese, if you 'ad. I thought per'aps you'd bought a present for your young lady.'

'Mrs. Vyner,' replied Mr. Neatby, in a voice glacial as liquid air itself, 'you forget yourself.'

Mrs. Vyner set down the box with an angry thump, and proceeded to lay the cloth in injured silence.

When she had gone, Mr. Neatby approached the mysterious package delicately, much as though it had been an infernal machine of some sort, and regarded it searchingly on all sides. It most certainly emanated from the millinery establishment of 'Madame Louise,' but was none the less certainly addressed in sprawly, feminine handwriting to 'S. S. Neatby, Esq., M.A.'

Just then Mrs. Vyner opened the door, saying waspishly, 'Ere's your kitting, sir; it keeps getting under my feet while I'm dishin' up.'

It seemed to have gained considerable vigour during the night, for it rushed across the room and up the curtain.

But Mr. Neatby had screwed his courage to the sticking-place, and even the tempestuous entry of the kitten could not turn him from his purpose. Penknife in hand, he cut the string of the bonnet-box, and lifted the lid timidly, prepared no doubt for some tissue-paper protected ['confection' within. When lo! even as

that of the shoe-box on the previous night was this interior ; hay, dry and fragrant of stable, met his astonished gaze, while seated in its midst was a tabby kitten, who gathered herself together for a spring the instant the lid was lifted, and sprang with such good will as to turn the box over on its side, when she immediately dashed under the table.

Mr. Neatby gazed, as if hypnotised, at the tumbled box, till the rattling of dishes outside warned him of the near approach of his landlady with lunch, and roused him from his trance.

He stooped hastily, thrust the scattered hay into the bandbox, clapped on the lid, and placed it under the knee-hole of his writing-table.

The door was opened rather suddenly to admit Mrs. Vyner ; kitten number one descended from the curtain, and Mr. Neatby found himself almost praying that kitten number two would stay under the table while his landlady was in the room. Mrs. Vyner glanced disdainfully in the direction of the bandbox, noted that the string had been cut, set the dishes on the table with somewhat unnecessary violence, and departed without having opened her lips, just as the two kittens frisked out from beneath the table.

Mr. Neatby, harassed and flushed 'all over his eminent forehead,' did not begin his lunch. He went back to the bandbox again, studied the label anew, and finally rummaged in the hay inside.

His search was rewarded by the discovery of a rather dirty piece of paper, on which was written 'A Present from Framilode,' Framilode being a village in the neighbourhood, celebrated for the manufacture of a certain kind of mug which always bore that legend. He put it carefully beside the other card and label in his desk, and returned to his lunch with but small appetite, and a frown of perplexity upon his brow. The kittens set up a perfect chorus of mewing ; Mr. Neatby braced himself to explain the new arrival to Mrs. Vyner, and rang for the pudding.

'It's my belief, sir,' said Mrs. Vyner that evening, 'that somebody's a puttin' a 'oax upon you. I sent my niece to that there Madame Looeese's with the box lid, an' she see madame 'erself, and *she* says as it's a hold box, an' that they certingly never sent you no box, nor wouldn't think of such a liberty, and you one of the school gentlemen and all. But my niece, she said as madame did laugh when she 'eard about the kitten and 'er young ladies too.'

Mr. Neatby writhed.

To a man of his reserved and sensitive temperament, the reflection that his name could by any possibility be bandied about by a milliner and her assistants was little short of maddening. If he could then and there have ordered Mrs. Vyner 'to take five hundred lines,' it might have given him some relief. But in all things he was a just man, and he knew that his landlady had at all events meant kindly in trying to discover the perpetrator of the outrage; for the fact remained that somebody had most assuredly 'put a 'oax' on him in the shape of the liveliest of tabby kittens.

It never occurred to him to suspect any of the boys. For how could one of them come by either handbox or kittens? To be sure, there were some day boys, but it happened that these were nearly all 'on the Classical,' and Mr. Neatby had but little to do with them.

Of course he reckoned without the ubiquitous Figgins, who, unlike Mr. Neatby, *had* a young lady, who was employed by Madame Louise, and for whom it was an easy matter to procure both a disused handbox and a new label.

'You're certain he got them all right?' whispered Peter to Figgins at his next lesson, as that worthy rushed forward officiously to settle the sack on the horse's back. 'He gave me back my notes simply smothered in red ink, and I thought I saw a mark like a kitten's paw, but I couldn't be sure.'

'Law bless you! yes, sir, 'e got 'em right enough. I took 'em myself, and wot's more, both of 'em's there still, for I passed by this mornin' and 'appened to look down the airey, and there they both was as peart as print. I s'pose we'd better wait a day or so for the next 'un, 'adn't us?'

'Yes, Figgins, wait two days till you see me again,' and Peter dug his knees into his horse and rode at the first jump.

'It's rather decent of him to *keep* them,' thought Peter to himself, who was tender-hearted where animals were concerned. 'Perhaps, if he doesn't clap on any more lines for a bit, I'll let him off with two.'

But, alas for good intentions! When Peter got back to the house, he found Tod bursting with indignation. For at 'Practical Chemistry' that very morning Tod, who was supposed to be engaged in the manufacture of hydrogen, used so many conflicting ingredients as to cause an explosion and dense smoke, and a smell so appalling that it drove the whole class into the corridor, and caused several testy masters to send indignant messages demanding where the infernal smell came from.

Mr. Neatby, exasperated to the last degree, not only told Tod to take five hundred lines, but bade him return the very next half-holiday and spend the afternoon in doing similar experiments under his master's supervision.

Tod confided his grievance to Peter at great length, and concluded his recital with the injunction : ' Let him have all three, the *beast* ! I wish they were young gorillas.'

Mr. Neatby was very busy. He was taking extra duty for a master who was ill, and for three or four days after the arrival of the second kitten really had not a moment to call his own, so, as Mrs. Vyner seemed to take quite kindly to the new arrivals—only taking care to charge her lodger an extra quart of milk daily for their maintenance—he almost forgot their existence.

By Saturday evening he had accumulated a mass of mid-term examination work to correct, and directly after supper set himself down to it, with four clear hours before him, for he often worked till after midnight.

His lamp was trimmed, his fire burned brightly, and one kitten—the first—sat purring on the hearth. That, and the scratching of Mr. Neatby's pen as he corrected the generally mistaken views of boys as to the nature of an element, were the only sounds till there came a thunderous rap outside, and the door-bell pealed loudly.

Mr. Neatby frowned, but never looked up from his corrections. He had not been long at the school, and was not upon intimate terms with any of the masters, so that it was hardly likely to be a caller for him. He heard somebody open the front door, then some vehicle drive away. A moment later there was a knock at his door, and Jemima, Mrs. Vyner's niece, came in, bearing a hamper.

' Please, sir, this 'ave just come by rail ; there wasn't nothing to pay.'

' Very well,' Mr. Neatby answered without looking up ; ' put it down, please ; I can't attend to it just now.'

Jemima did as she was told, and once more silence settled upon the room.

But not for long. Kitten number one got restless ; it walked round and round the hamper, and sniffed and mewed, and mewed and sniffed, with irritating persistency. Moreover, a curious muffled echo seemed to accompany its mewings. Mr. Neatby bore it for five minutes, then pushed back his chair, caught the disturbing kitten by the scruff of its neck, and bore it to the top of the kitchen stairs, calling to Jemima to take it down. That young lady obeyed

his summons, taking the kitten tenderly into her arms with many endearments; but all the same she remarked to her aunt, 'Well, I do think as 'e might manage to look after *one* on 'em 'isself, that I do.'

Mr. Neatby went back to his papers and corrected with more vigour than before; but, in spite of his haste, in spite of his absorption, the muffled mewling continued.

At last he laid down his pen and listened. 'Surely,' he thought, 'it can't sound like that from downstairs. I must have got the sound on my nerves; it's really most annoying.' It *was* annoying; it grew louder and louder till it seemed at his very side.

Mr. Neatby was endowed with great powers, both of self-control and concentration. Having decided that the sound was in his imagination, and not actual, he went on with the paper that he was correcting, but as he placed it on the top of the growing pile he chanced to notice the hamper which was placed on the hearthrug close beside him. 'Apples, I suppose, from home,' he thought to himself; 'but all the same, I'd better see.' He lifted it on to his knee. 'Too light for apples,' he thought again. 'What can they have sent?'

The lid was not very tightly fastened, and a slash or two of the penknife at the string restraining it brought it away.

Hay, and again hay, in this case forming the cosy nest of *two* kittens, one tortoiseshell and one black; both lively and vociferous beyond either of their predecessors. Mr. Neatby ejaculated just one word, and sat perfectly still with the open hamper on his knee. The kittens climbed out and made hay among his papers, but he took no notice. 'An angry man was he,' and when a man of his temperament is angry, he usually sits tight. The kittens got tired of the table, and jumped lightly to the floor, carrying a few dozen papers with them in their flight, but still Mr. Neatby sat on staring into space.

When at last he roused himself, he once more sought some solution of the mystery in the address label, but the yellow railway label on the back had been torn away, and only 'ton' remained. The address itself was printed very neatly by hand.

Inside the hamper he found a little pink envelope with nicked edges such as servants love. He opened it, and printed by the same hand, on a piece of paper to match, was the following verse:

'The kitten's a persistent beast,
It comes when you expect it least,
It comes in ones, it comes in twos—
And when it comes it always mews.'

'Ah!' Mr. Neatby said softly to himself, 'some boy is at the bottom of this.'

The clock struck twelve, and he remembered with a start that both his landlady and Jemima would certainly be in bed.

What was to be done with the kittens?

He was far too kind-hearted to turn them out of doors on a cold November night. They were really uncommonly pretty little beasts, and as he watched their gambols he found himself quoting:

'Alas! regardless of their doom,
The little victims play,'

and then realised that they had no business to be playing at all at that time of night, and that he certainly wanted to go to bed.

He really was a much-trying man that night. First, he had to catch the kittens and put them in the hamper, and as fast as he put one in the other jumped out. This took some time. Then he carried the hamper up to bed with him, the kittens making frantic efforts to escape the while. And when at last he did get to bed, he had to get up again to let them out of the hamper, for they made such a frightful din no mortal could sleep. They finally elected to settle down on Mr. Neatby's bed, and in the morning one of them ungratefully scratched his nose because he happened to move when the kitten in question chose to walk over his face.

When at last he arose from very broken slumbers, the black kitten upset the shaving-water and scalded its foot, and made a dreadful uproar, and the tortoiseshell, while investigating the mantelpiece, upset and threw into the grate a blue vase belonging to Mrs. Vyner.

In chapel on Sunday morning, Tod and Peter noted gleefully the long scratch on 'old Stinks's' nose ('Stinks' being, I regret to say, the name by which Mr. Neatby was known among his pupils). And curiosity as to how he was getting on with his rapidly increasing family of cats consumed them. In the afternoon they walked up and down the road outside his lodgings for nearly an hour, but nothing did they discover; for Mrs. Vyner's windows were shrouded by white curtains, no one went in or out of the house, and all their loitering was not rewarded by so much as hearing a distant mew.

The fact was that Mr. Neatby had gone for a long walk to try to work off his irritation. That morning, while he was still at breakfast, Mrs. Vyner had appeared in his sitting-room, and somewhat stormily informed him that her 'ouse was not a 'ome for lost

cats, nor never 'ad been.' And she concluded her harangue as follows :

'I've 'ad gentlemen, masters at the school, for twelve year come Michaelmas, and some 'ave bin trouble enough, the Lard knows. With their football and 'ockey and 'ot baths in the middle of the afternoon, and the mud on their flannings something hawful ; but a gentleman as surrounded 'imself with cats in sech numbers I never 'ave 'ad nor never won't again, I 'opes and prays. And although it do go agin my conscience to do it of a Sunday, I *must* 'ast you, sir, to take a week's notice from yesterday. For start a fresh week with sech goin's on, and cats a comin' by every post as it were, I can't ; no, not if the king 'imself was to 'ast me on 'is bended knees.'

In vain poor Mr. Neatby pointed out that, far from 'surrounding himself' with kittens, they were thrust upon him he knew not by whom or from where ; that he had no intention of keeping any of them if Mrs. Vyner objected ; and that it would really be extremely inconvenient for him to have to seek new rooms in the middle of the term.

Mrs. Vyner was implacable. 'I'm very upset about it too, sir,' she answered, more in sorrow than in anger ; 'for I did think as 'ow I'd got a nice quiet gentleman, you not bein' given to them 'orrid games as is so dirty, nor wantin' an over-amount of cookin'. But a gentleman as 'eaven appears to rain cats on like it do on you is not for the likes of me, nor shan't be. And though I'm truly sorry as you should be so afflicted, I must 'ast you to leave my 'ouse, sir, next Saturday as ever is, and that's my last word.'

It wasn't, not by a long way ; for although Mr. Neatby reasoned, nay, even almost implored Mrs. Vyner to reconsider her decision, she would hardly let him get a word in edgeways, and remained unshaken in her desire that he should vacate her rooms. "'Ow do I know, sir,' she asked again and again, 'wot hanimals may be sent you next ? My 'eart would be in my mouth every time the door-bell rang.'

Truly, Tod and Peter had planned a fearful vengeance had they only known it. But they did not know it, and their unsatisfied curiosity was their undoing. On Monday morning at the riding-school they arranged with Figgins that he was to leave the fifth kitten at Mr. Neatby's rooms that afternoon, just before afternoon school finished. The despatch of the hamper had been managed by a railway man, a friend of Figgins, whose cart started from a parcel-

receiving office close to the riding-school, and he delivered the hamper on his evening round.

Directly school came out, the twins decided to rush down to Mr. Neatby's rooms before lock-up, to ask some frivolous question about a paper he had set, and perhaps by great good luck be present at the unveiling of the end of the sending. All fell out exactly as they had arranged. Figgins took the parcel. Mrs. Vyner received it, addressed as before to 'S. S. Neatby, Esq., M.A.' (his real name was 'Stuart' not 'Stinks'), carried it grimly into his sitting-room, and laid it on the table. She removed all her own ornaments from chimneypiece and sideboard, and then went downstairs and brought up all four kittens (poor Mr. Neatby had not yet had time to arrange for their painless destruction), and shut them up in the room to await their owner's return.

At ten minutes past five he hastened in, trod on one of the kittens as he entered the room, and struck a match to light his lamp. The kitten noisily proclaimed its injury, and the other three expressed their sympathy in similar terms. When he caught sight of the brown-paper parcel on the table he turned pale. The very feel of it was enough, and even before he had torn off the cover he was sure of its contents. Yes, in a common little birdcage was a fat, white kitten, and an uncommonly tight fit she was.

He did not attempt to let her out, though her position was plainly one of extreme discomfort, but stood with the cage in his hands, and the four mewling kittens about his feet, in so universally distrustful a frame of mind that he began to think that Mrs. Vyner herself was in the plot to victimise him.

The door was opened, and his landlady's voice announced, 'Two young gentlemen to see you, sir.'

Fresh-coloured and handsome, ruddy from their run in the cold evening air, square-shouldered and upstanding, Tod and Peter allowed their two pairs of candid blue eyes to travel from their master's angry face to his hands, from his hands holding the caged kitten to his feet, where congregated the rest of the sending, and then exclaimed in a chorus of genial astonishment, 'Why, sir, what a lot of kittens you keep!'

Now, although he had been at the school three terms, no boy had ever ventured to call upon Mr. Neatby before. Other masters might occasionally ask boys to tea or permit an occasional call out of school hours to arrange about house matches, &c. But he had ever discouraged any familiarity whatsoever, and that Tod and

Peter should dare to intrude upon him at such a moment seemed to him, as indeed it was, a piece of unparalleled impertinence.

'What do you want here?' he asked angrily. 'It's after lock-up.'

'Mr. Ord gave us leave to come,' Peter said eagerly. 'We don't understand this question, sir; could you explain? What a noise those kittens do make, don't they?'

Now, if Tod could only have refrained from looking at Peter, Mr. Neatby might have remained for ever in the dark as to the mystery of the kittens. But, even as Peter spoke, Tod, unaware that the light from the master's lamp shone full on his face, winked delightedly at his brother, and in a flash Mr. Neatby connected their unexpected and unnecessary visit with those equally unwelcome visitants whose advent during the past week had entailed so much annoyance upon him.

Taking no notice of the paper Peter held out towards him, he laid the little cage on the table, and said very quietly:

'Now, that you are here, you will perhaps kindly explain what you mean by sending all these animals to me.'

'Us, sir!' the twins exclaimed breathlessly, and as usual in chorus—'Us!'

'Did you or did you not cause these five kittens to be sent to me?' Mr. Neatby asked again.

Dead silence.

As Tod said afterwards, 'It was one of those beastly yes or no questions that there's no getting out of.'

'Did you or did you not?' Mr. Neatby asked again, a little louder than before, though even the kittens had ceased mewling and seemed to be listening. 'But I know you did, and I wish to know further what you mean by a piece of such intolerable impertinence, and such wanton defiance of school rules.'

'There's no rule about not sending kittens, sir,' murmured Peter, with the least suspicion of a giggle in his voice.

That giggle broke down the last barrier of Mr. Neatby's self-control. For full five minutes he permitted himself to thunder at those boys, finally bidding them take all five kittens away with them there and then.

'But we can't, sir; we *can't* take them back to the house,' pleaded Tod. 'Whatever would Mrs. Ord say?'

'Well, you must take them away from here, anyway, and what's more, you must give up the names of your confederates, that I may take proceedings against them for their un-

warrantable interference with my privacy. Who were they, now ? at once !

‘It’s absolutely impossible for us to do that, sir,’ Peter said firmly, and Tod might have been heard to murmur something about ‘can’t and won’t.’

‘Then,’ said Mr. Neatby, ‘you will both come with me to the principal now at once.’

The principal of that school is one of the youngest head-masters in England, and he would not be the success he is did he not possess a sense of humour. He partially pacified Mr. Neatby ; he vigorously ‘tanned’ Tod and Peter there and then, and during the remainder of the evening he laughed to himself more than once.

For the remainder of the term Tod and Peter found their comings and goings so perpetually watched and suspected by the ‘young brusher’ aforesaid, that even the rapturous recollection of the success of their sending was somewhat dimmed. But it was not they who suffered most ; to this day Mr. Neatby suspects of sinister intention anyone who so much as mentions kittens in his presence, and new boys always wonder why their schoolfellows are so anxious that they should mew in the chemistry lectures. They only do it once.

L. ALLEN HARKER.

Wild Wheat.

BY M. E. FRANCIS (MRS. FRANCIS BLUNDELL),

AUTHOR OF 'FIANDER'S WIDOW,' 'THE MANOR FARM,'
'LYCHGATE HALL,' ETC.

CHAPTER VI.

EAVESDROPPING IN THE CHINA-CLOSET.

SATURDAY was a very busy day at Hounsell's, as is the case in most rural establishments; it was Mrs. Hounsell's pride and joy to be especially active herself. At early dawn she invested herself in the rusty black lace cap and bibbed apron which struck terror into the heart of the maids, and from five o'clock till sundown there was, as they surreptitiously murmured to each other, no knowing where to have her.

On one particularly hot Saturday, towards the end of July, Mrs. Hounsell was even more busy than usual. She had superintended the scrubbing of kitchen and passages; detected dust in remote corners; turned up mats and carpets to point out accusatory straws and feathers, and, in fact, contrived before dinner-time to reduce herself and her subordinates to a condition of exasperation bordering on tears.

After dinner, however, when the black cap had been replaced by a mushroom hat, and Mrs. Hounsell had sallied forth to inspect such outdoor premises as came under her immediate jurisdiction, the womenfolk heaved a simultaneous sigh of relief, and consoled themselves by remarking that it would be somebody else's turn to catch it now.

For some time Mrs. Hounsell's voice was heard uplifted in inquiry, and more frequently in wrath, in the neighbourhood of the milk-house and the wood-shed; then it sounded from the direction of the cow-houses and the pigsties, and was finally lost to the occupants of the house after the garden gate swung to behind her.

It was one of her self-imposed duties on Saturday to cut off the heads of the dead roses along the north wall; but on this particular afternoon there were few for her to remove. The first bloom was over; the second was yet in bud. She pulled out with some difficulty, from the pocket attached to her waistband, the huge turnip watch which had descended to her husband from his grandfather, and, after opening its various cases, consulted it gravely. There was still an hour before tea-time. It was against Mrs. Hounsell's principles to take off her apron and assume the white widow's cap of ordinary wear, and to comport herself generally as a leisured person, before six o'clock on Saturday afternoons. She must find some little job to occupy her until that time.

After a moment's reflection she decided to repair to the china-closet: there was always plenty to be done there, and the best cups on the upper shelves had not been dusted for quite a long time.

The china-closet was situated at the back of the house, and its narrow high-set window looked out upon the yard. It felt pleasantly cool when, armed with a soft cloth, and with her shady hat a little pushed back on her head, the old lady entered, and at once set to work. The window was open, as was every window in the house on that breathless summer's day, and sounds of cheerful bustle reached her from time to time as she busied herself with her task—the clatter of pails from the milk-house, the whistling of the stable-boy as he crossed the yard, the sound of Sue's scrubbing-brush and the clink of her pail, as she finished operations in the cheese-room.

All at once Mrs. Hounsell heard Peter's quick tread—she would know his step among a thousand, though most people were unable to distinguish it from Godfrey's. It crossed the yard from the gate towards the house, but paused suddenly; then his voice rang out, sharp and decisive:

'Put a little more good will into it, my lad—a little more elbow-grease!'

The mother smiled to herself; Peter was like her—clear-sighted and masterful. He would not suffer any slipshod work to pass unnoticed.

Now came the voice of Tom, the 'odd boy,' in injured tones: 'I do polish 'em so well as I can, sir. I be all in a lather wi' perspiration—sure I be! There baint nobody in this 'ere place as do work harder nor what I do do!'

'You don't take the dirt off first, then,' said Peter, still

apparently unmollified. 'My boots never look decent, no matter what I say to you. You must put a proper shine on them. Now, mind ! If they are not to my liking, you'll have to do them again to-morrow morning.'

'Oh, it's about his boots,' commented Mrs. Hounsell, with a somewhat puzzled expression. She set down the cup which she had been carefully wiping, and sliding forward her own foot, inspected its covering. The stout garden shoe was well worn, and had been toe-capped, but it was polished—so it seemed to her—to a nicety. And Tom had cleaned it like all the other boots in the house : it was strange he should neglect Peter's.

She heard her son's step pass along the passage and mount the stairs, but she did not call out to him.

As she resumed her dusting, still with a perplexed air, another voice was uplifted in the yard below—Deb's this time.

'Don't ye take on, my boy,' the dairywoman was saying, no doubt in answer to some murmured complaint of Tom's. 'If a hark-angel was to go a-polishin' o' Maister Peter's boots there wouldn't be no satisfyin' en at the present time. He be in love—that's what's the matter wi' he.'

Sue's scrubbing-brush ceased ; Mrs. Hounsell heard her pattens come clinking over to Tom's bench.

'Lard, Deb, ye don't mean that, sure ! Why, Maister Peter don't never notice any maid.'

''Tis that and naught else,' returned Deb decisively. 'Once a young fellow do get so particular about his boots as Maister Peter be, 'tis a certain sign as he be in love—a sure sign it be. 'Tis a strange thing, but the male sect do seem to be constitooted that way—love do take 'em in their feet.'

A loud masculine laugh was now heard ; 'Olfie' (otherwise Alfred), the stableman, had come to join in the conversation.

'Dear, to be sure ! I never did hear sich rubbish. Take us in the feet, do it, Deb ; how do 'ee make that out ?'

'I say,' persisted Deb, 'the passion o' love do take a man in the feet same as it do take a maid in the head. When a maid be in love, what do she do ? Buys a new hat straight off, or, if she can't manage that, she'll stick a flower or a ribbon, or some sich fallal i' the wold 'un. An' a man'll strike out immediate for new boots, if he can afford 'em, an' if he can't, he'll polish up them he's got till ye can see your face in 'em ; or else, p'r'aps, he'll buy a pair o' socks wi' fine colours and stripes to 'em. I see'd ye wi' a pair o' red an' yellor yerself o' Sunday, Olfie !'

A chorus of giggles, in which Sue's voice seemed to predominate, greeted this sally; and Mrs. Hounsell, setting down the cup with a final air, made an angry pace or two towards the door, but was arrested by a remark of Deb's.

'Well, you'll find, all on you, as I be in the right on't. I see'd Maister Peter a-gatherin' of a girt posy at five o'clock one marnin'!'

Mrs. Hounsell clutched at the edge of the cupboard.

'E-es,' continued Deb, 'and 'tis three Sundays since he've a-been to church i' th' marnin' wi' the missus. And why? 'Cause he do go a-coortin', same as many another young chap, in church-time, when most o' the folks be out o' the way.'

Mrs. Hounsell sat down suddenly on the solitary stool which the china-closet boasted; her head was swimming, her face crimson with wrath and surprise; yet it was borne in upon her that the word so idly spoken conveyed a truth. This, then, was the meaning of Peter's eccentric behaviour during the last few weeks; of his moodiness, his outbursts of temper, his constant preoccupation. Mrs. Hounsell had foreborne to blame her favourite son for these and many other shortcomings, but she had not failed to notice them. His most serious lapse, that which had affected her and his brother most deeply—his absence from Morning Church during the last three Sundays—could no doubt be accounted for in the same way. He was in love—in love with some unworthy girl.

Mrs. Hounsell could not doubt the girl's unworthiness. Why else should he make a secret of his attachment; why should he, above all, forego his most sacred duties?

The impending calamity must be grappled with at once. Mrs. Hounsell usually felt herself equal to any emergency; but on this occasion the shock had been so great that her limbs trembled under her when she rose, and she could barely summon up enough energy to hurry to the yard by a circuitous route and fall upon the group of idle gossips there. Even as she approached she saw the eager faces and wagging heads, and the thought that they were discussing Peter stung her like a whip.

After tea Mrs. Hounsell held a solemn conclave with her elder son; and Peter, who had seemed more absent-minded than ever during the meal, and had rushed off immediately afterwards, as was his wont, found them both arraigned in judgment on his return.

'Where have you been, Peter?' inquired the mother, in a voice which sounded harsh because of the effort she made to hide its trembling.

He was on the defensive in an instant. The expedition from which he had returned had in truth been innocent enough : a pilgrimage to the beech-tree, in which, at rare intervals, he sometimes found the lady of his heart installed. To-night, however, the niche had been empty.

‘I have been for a walk!’ said Peter shortly.

A dead pause ensued.

‘Wouldn’t you like to know what Godfrey has been doing?’ he pursued sarcastically. ‘It is his turn to give an account of himself.’

‘I know very well what your brother has been doing,’ returned Mrs. Hounsell; ‘he has been here with me.’

Another weighty silence ensued.

‘Well?’ said Peter.

‘Your brother,’ resumed Mrs. Hounsell impressively. Ever since Peter’s early childhood his mother had used this formula when she wished to reprimand: the tone in which she desired him to run out and play with Godfrey differed materially from that in which she accused him of quarrelling with his brother. The mere words were now sufficient to notify that there was trouble ahead. ‘Your brother and I,’ said Mrs. Hounsell, ‘have been much pained and surprised at your conduct, Peter. We—we feel that you are keeping something from us!’

‘Mother,’ broke out Peter hotly, ‘I am keeping nothing from you that you have any right to know. Neither you nor Godfrey have any right to meddle with my private concerns!’

‘Then there is something,’ interrupted the mother, in such a tone of anguish that his heart was melted.

He looked at her more kindly.

‘I am doing nothing wrong,’ he said; ‘I can assure you of that.’

‘Why don’t you come to church, then?’ cried Godfrey, speaking for the first time.

The colour rushed to Peter’s face; but he returned the other’s gaze steadily.

‘That concerns myself, and only myself,’ he replied.

‘Only yourself?’ interpolated Mrs. Hounsell.

Peter turned to her with gathering anger.

‘I won’t answer any more questions,’ he said. ‘If I choose for reasons of my own to attend Service in the evening, it is no business of anyone else’s that I can see.’

‘Yes,’ broke out his mother, bitterly, ‘you go to Evening

Church, like all the common people. You have taken up with low company, I fear, Peter.'

Peter laughed, and walked towards the door; but his mother called him back.

'At my request, Peter,' she said, 'at my very special request, you will attend Divine Service with me to-morrow morning. I—I have reasons—there has been gossip. I beg you, dear Peter, come with me to-morrow.'

'I can't,' he returned gruffly.

'Surely you might give up your fancy for once, when the mother asks you!' cried Godfrey.

He was angry, and also hurt to the heart's core. Peter, glancing from him to Mrs. Hounsell, saw that she was on the verge of tears. He hesitated for a moment and then turned from them:

'I can't!' he said again, and rushed from the room.

CHAPTER VII.

A CRISIS.

It was intensely, suffocatingly hot when Peter, on the following morning, took up his usual position in the little copse overlooking the stony bit of lane by which Nathalie must pass. It had come to be his established custom thus to watch for her each Sunday, that he might wheel her bicycle to the summit of the Downs. He was also used to reverse the process on her homeward journey. But this homeward journey was undertaken after an interval which varied in length according to Nathalie's mood, and also, it must be added, to the attitude assumed by Peter. If the young man became over-ardent, the girl straightway sprang to her feet and made a feint of herself piloting the bicycle down the track; if, on the contrary, he were unduly shy or silent, she tarried in the shade, and was by turns arch and mischievous, or gentle and sympathetic, until the cloud lifted from Peter's brow, and his eyes began to shine after a fashion which seemed to warn Miss Manvers that she had proceeded far enough. Then would come the hasty farewell and the sudden flight, accompanied, in this instance, by that little backward smile and nod which never failed to make Peter's foolish heart leap. She let him come near to her sometimes, but never near enough; in her most charming moments

he found her elusive. At other times she held him altogether at arm's length; but she never suffered him to part from her in anger.

On this particular Sunday morning Peter looked and felt gloomy enough. He was ill-pleased with himself, and ill-pleased with her. How would it all end? he asked himself. He could not go on for ever, living from week to week just for the sake of these Sunday hours which he remorsefully felt were filched from higher claims; still less could he bear to think of relinquishing them. He was bewitched by the girl; his every thought and feeling were swayed by her, and she played with him—fooled him—never permitted herself, even at the moments when they seemed nearest to each other, to grant him any tangible hope.

As Peter lay on the hot bank with the glow from the turf striking upwards at his face like that of a fire, and the drone of bees and gnats sounding heavily in his ears, he bethought him suddenly that Nathalie mocked at this passion of his, as Canute of old mocked at the sea: 'Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther.'

And he smiled grimly to himself as he remembered how the waters, rising higher and higher, would have engulfed the old man had he not withdrawn in time. Who knew? These other waves, which he himself felt ever rising within him, might one day sweep away all imaginary barriers.

There she was at last! In spite of his wrath he was on his feet in an instant, hurrying breathlessly down the hill.

She smiled at him in silence as she relinquished her bicycle, and he, too, refrained from speaking. He fancied she glanced at him oddly as they paced together up the incline, but he determined within himself that to-day she should be the first to break the silence.

They reached her usual starting-point, however, without a word being exchanged, and Nathalie mounted and rode off with a little smile, that was half sad and wholly mysterious.

Back went Peter to the copse, more ill at ease even than before; but all his whilom remorse swamped in a new and yet more fierce indignation with himself. Why had he been so unmannerly? Surely he might at least have given her a 'Good-day!' She would think him a perfect boor! And she had looked so white, too; anyone might have seen something was amiss. He had worked himself up to a condition well-nigh bordering on frenzy by the time she returned, and began to stammer forth an apology almost as soon as the small, weary figure was within hailing distance.

'What must you have thought of me?' he concluded.

Nathalie, who had slackened her pace without attempting to alight, smiled gently.

'I was not at all surprised,' she said. 'It is too hot to talk.'

'Yes, it is indeed hot,' he agreed eagerly, 'but I have found another place behind a beech-tree which is even more shady than our old one, and where you get a little breeze. Do come, quickly.'

She hesitated, still moving slowly beside him.

'It would be almost better to go indoors at once,' she said. 'I am so tired—so tired—it is no use to get cool when one knows one must make oneself hot again in a moment.'

'What do you mean?' cried Peter hoarsely.

Her eyes fell before his.

'You will come to-day, as you have always come,' said he; his voice rang out now, clear and commanding. Taking possession of the handle-bar he turned the front wheel in the direction of the copse.

Nathalie laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

'Let me at least get off,' said she.

As she sat down on the shady bank designated by Peter, however, she became grave again.

'Listen, Mr. Hounsell,' she said seriously. 'You must understand—I come here for the last time!'

Peter, who had been propping the bicycle against a tree, turned round sharply; and she repeated the words, gazing at him steadily the while.

'I come here for the last time! It must end—after to-day!'

He dropped down beside her suddenly, and in a moment took possession of both her slender wrists. He felt her pulses flutter like the heart of an imprisoned bird; his own were leaping wildly.

'You must understand something, too,' said Peter. 'It cannot end—like this! You have——'

'Led me on,' he had been minded to say, but there was that in Peter which forbade him to utter the words. Those burning eyes of his, however, said more than he knew, and hers dropped again before them.

'You cannot'—he went on brokenly—'you cannot—throw me off like this.'

Her face had grown whiter even than before, and a sudden piteous look, which was neither grief nor terror, yet which partook of both, overspread it.

But Peter's passion rendered him for the moment merciless.

'You must have known,' he said brokenly; 'you must have seen—you must feel now how it is with me.'

Nathalie, rallying her courage, sought to disengage herself, but his grip almost unconsciously tightened round the slender wrists.

She looked him in the face now, however, with a little flicker of the lip which might have been scorn.

'And you, do you not know—do you not feel, how impossible it would be for this to go on?'

'It is too late now,' cried Peter. 'You shouldn't have let it begin. Oh, I know and I feel everything. You are miles and miles above me; but I love you more madly than ever a man loved a woman yet. I only seem to live for the chance of seeing you—speaking with you. All day long I am tortured with suspense, and you play with that suspense—you know you do. You never let me be sure of you for a moment. But at least the Sundays were mine.'

Unconsciously his face had become wistful, his voice pleading; his grasp relaxed, and Nathalie instantly jerked away her hands. Thereupon Peter's wrath broke forth again.

'And you think you can take me up and throw me away like a toy of which you are tired!' he exclaimed, vehemently. 'I suppose the truth is that you *are* tired of me!'

Nathalie sighed, and began to pluck idly at the little tufts of thyme with which the bank was studded.

'No,' she said at length; 'no, I am not tired of you.'

After a pause she turned to Peter again, her eyes sparkling, a faint flush in her cheeks.

'It is not we who tire,' she cried passionately; 'it is not the woman who tires of the man. It is the other way. The man is all fire and flames, devoured by love, so he says. Yet find me the one who will make a real sacrifice for the sake of his beloved!'

'There is nothing I would not sacrifice for you,' said Peter, with a gasp.

Nathalie laughed, an odd little dry laugh.

'Oh, yes, so you all say; but when it comes to the point it is another story.'

'But—what sacrifice do you mean?' inquired Peter, with his brain in a whirl.

'Oh, I am speaking in general. Sometimes it may be one thing, sometimes it may be another. Pride, position—even a fancied obstacle. Bah! don't let us talk any more of such follies. Really, Mr. Hounsell, you are absurd! Why should you make

such a tragic face because for three Sundays you have very kindly pushed my bicycle up and down an abominable bit of road, and because of these little conversations which we have had? I was, perhaps, imprudent to permit them, and now I am going to be wise and put an end to them.'

'You will still find me here on the Downs every Sunday, whether you like it or not,' cried Peter.

'I shall not find you, because I shall not be there,' replied Nathalie. 'I go no more to church by this road; I have made other arrangements. There is a good man, a farmer, who goes also to the Catholic church. He drives a queer little, very shaky cariole. In future I shall meet him at the gate of the Croft, and he will take me.'

Peter was silent, unable for the moment to trust himself to speak; she had made her plans without a word to him, and was prepared to carry them out in utter disregard of his feelings.

'And now, Mr. Peter Hounsell,' she pursued, with more kindness, 'the best thing you can do is to forget me. It is not such a great affair, after all. A month ago you did not know me.'

'But I know you now!' said Peter. 'I—oh, have you no pity for me? Can you toss me aside like that? I, who have thought of nothing night or day but you. I—why, I could kiss the ground you walk on! I—I envy the poorest of Miss Manvers' labourers because they sometimes see you. When we parted, the other day, I met the underkeeper coming out of the plantation—I could have knocked him down because I knew he must have passed you, and the thought that he could see you and be near you, while I—'

A sudden laugh from Nathalie stemmed the mad torrent of his words.

'Well, the underkeeper is going away,' said she, lightly. 'Why don't you apply for the place? Then you could see me every day.'

Peter's eloquence deserted him all at once, and he stared at her aghast.

Apply for the underkeeper's place! He, Peter Hounsell! Never in the memory of man had a Hounsell been known to take wage!

With another laugh Nathalie scrambled to her feet.

'You see,' she cried, holding up one finger mockingly, 'you are all alike.'

'Is it possible that you really mean it?' faltered Peter, in a voice which sounded strange even to his own ears.

But Nathalie had already taken possession of her bicycle, and,

with her small face crimson, partly from exertion, partly, as was plain even to Peter's incredulous eyes, from some hidden emotion, began to propel it towards the path. As he hastened in her wake, she paused, and turned towards him imperatively :

'I forbid you !' she cried. 'Mr. Hounsell, I forbid you to follow me.'

And Peter fell back without a word of protest.

CHAPTER VIII.

PETER MAKES UP HIS MIND.

THE reapers had assembled earlier even than usual in Hounsell's yard. The forty-acre was to be cut that day : 'A terr'ble big bit o' work,' as one said to the other, and one that would have to be carried through with the utmost despatch, for even at that hour the oppressive heat and general sense of uneasiness seemed to indicate the advent of a storm.

'God send us good luck !' said Abel, repeating the inevitable formula.

'Amen !' responded the bystanders piously.

Then the business of the day began. The horses were led out and harnessed ; two of the reaping-machines went rattling forth triumphantly, but when the third was drawn from beneath the shed one of the men looked at it dubiously.

'There be summat a bit queer here,' he remarked. 'These 'ere blades don't seem to work so very well.'

He moved the wheel backwards and forwards with a critical air.

'Tis foolish talk—real foolish !' remonstrated Abel. 'That be the best machine—the new one what Mr. Godfrey got to-year. That bain't so very likely to go wrong, that bain't !'

'Ah,' agreed another. 'Joe, he don't seem to understand this 'ere new-fangled machinery. He don't trust nothin' new. If Joe was to have his way, us 'ud all be a-reapin' wi' sickles.'

'I don't know but what sickles is best in the long run,' said Joe. 'I d' 'low it 'ud be best for sich as we together to use 'em. Work warn't so scarce in old ancient days—'

'More work there was, but less pay,' interrupted Baverstock ;

'it do all come out same way i' th' end; but I do 'low you was never one to calculate, Joe. 'Tis as much as you can do to reckon up to six.'

'You'll ha' to reckon wi' my cluster o' five in a minute if you gie me much more sauce,' cried Joe, laughing good-humouredly, as he clenched his huge fist. 'Come up, Billy! Back, Di'mond! Catch hold o' that there chain, Bob; that's it!'

The reaper went clattering out of the yard with the remainder of the men behind it; but, after all, Joe's prognostications proved to be well-founded, for on reaching the field the machine was discovered to be practically useless.

When Godfrey rode up, shortly after breakfast, he found it discarded, while the unharnessed horses were standing in the shade of the hedge.

'Us didn't like to take 'em back, ye see, wi'out your arders,' explained Joe. 'We thought you'd mayhap have thikky machine sent to the smithy for Jan Fowler to see to. I d' 'low he'd soon put it to rights.'

'No, no,' cried Godfrey, as he dismounted and proceeded to inspect the machine with an air of great vexation. 'This is a complicated thing, and might easily be put out of gear altogether. I think it will have to go back to the makers. 'Tis too bad—to-day of all days, when the weather is so uncertain.'

Peter came up to the field an hour or two later; he looked pale and heavy-eyed, having, indeed, passed an absolutely sleepless night. The revulsion of feeling resulting from Nathalie's suggestion somewhat resembled that of the mediæval knight whose cruel lady sought to test his love by dropping her gauntlet among the lions in the arena; with this difference—that while the knight in question was instantaneously cured of his passion by the occurrence, Peter, though indignant and outraged, was as hopelessly in love as ever.

All night long he nursed his wrath; his heart alternately burning as he dwelt on the insult which she had offered him, and growing cold in considering the alternative. Never again to see her; never to hear her voice; never to be intoxicated by her smile, to be maddened by her varying moods! How should he take up his life again as if she did not exist? It was impossible—impossible—a contingency too intolerable to be contemplated.

The marked coldness of his mother and Godfrey did not induce additional calmness; he was angry with them—all the more angry, perhaps, because of his secret remorse. With that quick intuition

of his he read their thoughts, saw himself with their eyes, and raged the more.

Now, as he strode across the field, the men glanced askance at him; clearly he was not in a mood to be trifled with.

'Young maister's clothes will have to be took smaller or there'll be no livin' wi' en soon,' said one, looking after him.

After a brief examination of the idle machine, he called up Joe Adam and angrily inquired why the blacksmith had not been sent for to repair it at once.

'Well, 'tis this way, ye see, sir,' returned Joe, scratching his jaw. 'I did ax Maister Godfrey if I hadn't better fetch Jan Fowler, an' Maister Godfrey, he said as this 'ere reaper be terr'ble ticklish to deal wi', an' it 'ud most like require a more talented man to put it to rights nor what Jan be.'

'Nonsense,' rejoined Peter roughly, as he lifted the wheel, 'it's the simplest thing in the world; I can see exactly what's wrong. I could mend it myself if I had the proper tools. Run off to the smithy at once, and bring Fowler back with you.'

'Maister Godfrey said——' began Joe, mildly; but he broke off, quailing before Peter's glance. 'Right, sir,' he said submissively, 'I'll step up-along so quick as I can.'

It was dinner-time, however, before the smith arrived upon the scene, and the men who had gathered in the shade of the large tree, under which the reaper stood, listened to the ensuing discussion with keen interest. Peter, in a few brief, energetic words, expounded his theory, and Jan Fowler, after some questioning, much shaking of the head, and a dubious dropping of the lower lip, suddenly declared himself enlightened.

'Tis right, Maister Peter, 'tis right. I can follow 'ee now, sir. I couldn't get round your argyment all to once, but now I can see what ye be drivin' at.'

He was proceeding with new-found animation to divest himself of coat and waistcoat, when Godfrey, returning from a tour of inspection of some outlying fields where less interesting labours were in progress, hailed him in astonishment.

'Hullo! what's going on here?' he cried. 'You here, Fowler?'

'Yes,' said Peter, rising to his feet, 'I sent for Fowler. This is a simple matter, and can soon be put to rights.'

'I'm not so sure that it is simple,' retorted Godfrey, reining up his horse and looking round with an irritated air. 'Did none of you tell Mr. Peter that I said the machine was to go back to the makers?'

'E-es,' faltered Joe, 'leastways, I——'

He broke off with a sheepish smile at the blacksmith, being a polite man and loth to hurt his feelings.

'He told me you didn't want Fowler to do the job,' said Peter. 'But that's nonsense! Any numbskull can see that the machine can easily be put to rights. This nut wants to be loosened, and this lever put into place.'

Godfrey's colour rose; Peter's tone, even more than his words, had been insulting.

'It's a valuable machine, and I won't have it tampered with by people who don't understand it. You can go back, Fowler.'

The blacksmith began to put on his waistcoat with a lowering brow;

'I do 'low I could manage it so well as another,' he was beginning, when Peter cut him short.

'Nonsense, Godfrey; don't be a fool! The man can do it all right. There, don't waste time staring about you, John; get to work at once.'

'I forbid you to touch that machine, Fowler,' said Godfrey.

'Well, be I to do it or bain't I?' inquired the blacksmith, looking from one to the other, his waistcoat hanging loose from his sinewy arms, his straw hat pushed back on his perspiring brow. 'Tis a bit puzzlin' for a man to be ordered from one side to t' other like this. Who be the master here?'

A dead pause ensued; the brothers looked steadily at each other for a full minute without replying, then Godfrey said, in a decided voice:

'I am! I think it is time that it should be clearly understood. I am the master!'

'There shall be no mistake about it in future,' cried Peter, with a harsh laugh, as he walked away.

John Fowler, who was not a very perceptive person, gazed interrogatively at Godfrey, his waistcoat still dangling from his elbows.

'Be I to do this 'ere job, then?' he inquired.

'No,' said Godfrey shortly.

Fowler finished putting on his waistcoat, donned his coat on top of it, picked up his tools, and followed in Peter's wake. But, hasten as he might, he could not catch him up; and presently their roads diverged, for while the blacksmith took the path to the village, Peter turned off abruptly in the direction of Crayford.

He did not return till nightfall; Godfrey and his mother had already finished supper, and received him with stern dignity. News of the encounter between the brothers had been duly carried to Mrs. Hounsell with sundry exaggerations. Peter, as has been said, was not such a favourite as his brother, and popular feeling was against him. 'He had cheeked Maister Godfrey terr'ble,' it was said, 'an' gone marchin' off wi' hisself in a regular tantrum!' Godfrey, on being questioned, had unwillingly admitted that the narrative was true in the main. Peter had not come back for dinner or tea, and was late even for supper—the cup of his iniquity was full.

'You don't want any supper, I suppose,' began Mrs. Hounsell, in a tone of lofty severity. She never could realise that Peter was no longer a child.

'No,' said Peter, 'I don't.'

The answer was so unexpected that she paused a moment before continuing: 'You might at least have the manners to let me know when you don't intend to return for meals. It would show more respect for your mother.'

Peter's nostrils dilated and his mouth twitched.

'Oh, I'm learning to be respectful all right,' he said.

'If you are hinting at what passed between you and your brother to-day,' said Mrs. Hounsell, 'I must tell you that I think Godfrey was perfectly right—perfectly. You forget yourself too often.'

'Don't be afraid,' said Peter, 'I sha'n't forget myself again.'

He crossed the room towards her, and in spite of her indignation, her heart ached for him as she saw how pale he was.

'You must want something to eat, my dear,' she said, in a gentler tone.

'No, I don't; I had some bread and cheese at the Blue Lion.'

Mrs. Hounsell drew back with a little shiver of indignation. That her son should stoop to refresh himself at a low public-house when his mother's bountiful table awaited him was, to her, as wicked as it was incomprehensible.

'Oh, indeed!' she said frigidly.

Peter bent over her, however, and his hand dropped for a moment on her shoulder.

'Good-night, mother,' he said, and kissed her.

Mrs. Hounsell and Godfrey looked at each other as he went out of the room.

'Godfrey,' whispered Mrs. Hounsell tremulously, after a moment,

'do you think—can it be possible that your brother has been drinking?'

'I'm quite sure he hasn't,' returned Godfrey warmly; 'he's just put out at what happened to-day—I'm sorry it did happen; but I really couldn't stand it any longer.'

Peter was not yet in bed when Godfrey joined him in their big old-fashioned bedroom. He was standing by the window looking out into the night, not, as so often of late, towards Crayford, but towards the white ribbon of road that gleamed like silver under the moon.

Godfrey sat down on the nearest chair and began to unlace his boots, glancing surreptitiously from time to time at the motionless broad-shouldered figure which loomed darkly against the middle window. As he raised his head at last he called Peter's name in a low voice.

'Well?' said the other, without turning round.

'I say,' continued Godfrey, hesitatingly, 'you don't bear malice, do you, old chap?'

'No, I don't bear malice,' returned Peter, his voice sounding unlike itself because of a lump which had suddenly come in his throat; 'it's all right.'

'You know I've always tried to give in to you as much as I could,' pursued Godfrey; 'but to-day, when you went flatly against my orders—'

'Yes,' said Peter, 'I was a bit of an ass, wasn't I? I forgot myself, as the mother says.'

Godfrey sighed impatiently. He could not make Peter out; this unexpected meekness was not likely to be genuine, and, on the other hand, Peter was too generous by nature to repel an advance that was kindly meant.

'You won't make it up, then?' he said tentatively, after a pause.

'Make what up?' returned his brother, wheeling right round, and coming towards him. 'I'll shake hands, if that's what you mean; and I bear you no grudge. This thing was bound to happen. Shake hands! I'm glad to do it—it'll be the last time.'

'Oh, go on!' cried Godfrey, cheerily. 'What does a bit of a scrimmage signify between brothers? I daresay we'll have plenty more without liking each other any the worse.'

'No, we sha'n't!' said Peter, in the same lifeless tone, as he dropped Godfrey's hand.

No more passed between them then, and soon the sound of

Godfrey's regular breathing announced that he was asleep. The storm had blown over, after all, and the moon now shone in, clear and bright, through the uncurtained windows. Peter lay staring about him, now at the beamed ceiling, now at the curious old tapestried walls, sometimes conscious of a dull pain as he told himself that the familiar room would know him no more, but more frequently revolving a difficult problem: Should it be the road—or the other alternative?

At the first streak of dawn he rose, and after a cautious glance at Godfrey's sleeping form, crossed the room to the chest where his own belongings were bestowed. Thrusting his hand into the right-hand corner of this, and fumbling for a moment amid its contents, he drew forth a small box wherein Nathalie's handkerchief lay neatly folded. Had she asked for it again he had intended to return it to her; but somehow she never had asked, and though Peter, from motives of prudence, no longer carried it about his person, he congratulated himself every day that it remained in his possession.

Now, however, he must make his choice; if he took the road the handkerchief must be given back to Nathalie, with a farewell letter of explanation and, it might be, reproach. But if he did not take the road?

Half-unconsciously he raised the flimsy thing to his lips, and the faint perfume which still clung to it, and which was always associated with her presence, rose to his nostrils.

Peter hurriedly thrust it back amid its wrappers, and drew a long breath. He had made up his mind now—it should not be the road!

(To be continued.)

At the Sign of the Ship.

THE question of American copyrights and British copywrongs does not much affect the general public, or even most British authors. For me, I am entirely unconcerned. It is the English, if it is anybody, who buy our books; it is the Americans who ask for our autographs. But there has been a deluge of correspondence on the subject in the *Standard*, analysed by Mr. E. Marston in the *Publishers' Circular*. My own contribution to public opinion, I find, is *this*: 'The whole question is too metaphysical for me, but it is certain' (this seems a *non sequitur*) 'that the novel trade is overcrowded by incapable authors.' Indeed, twenty-six of the authors whose opinions are cited are hardened and habitual novelists, by habit and repute authors of romances. Of twelve others I never heard before in the whole course of my terrene existence. That makes thirty-eight. Of the others, four or five are men of letters, whose private emoluments cannot be vastly affected by the American market, because *belles lettres* are the joy of a little flock; there is one poet, if by 'Mr. Lewis Morris' is meant Sir Lewis Morris; there are two publishers, and a diplomatist, who is far too diplomatic to sign his name, and probably wrote in cipher.

* * *

One novelist recommends (and he a cricketer!) 'a partial block on our side.' He *must* know the results of 'a partial block.' The catch goes to wicket-keeper, short slip, or third man. Besides, what is there to block? The American novelist—it is at top and bottom a question of novels—does not often get near our wickets. We have uncommonly little use for modern American novels. Spanish ditto are vastly preferable. This is what Mr. Lucy calls 'the inadequacy of the rejoinder.' The Americans and we seem not to care much for each other's romances, whereas, in the old days when the Jolly Rodger flew fearless, and there was no copyright at all, American publishers would reprint almost any

English fiction. Mr. Frederic Harrison says that the present rules of the game are 'irritating to writers.' *De minimis non curat scriptor*, and, if the writer is not a novelist, *minima* are, as a rule, the most that he can expect from America. Mr. Harrison goes on to say that the present rules are 'most injurious to the cause of true literature to both peoples.' I don't see that much 'true literature' (copyright) is going about in danger of injury, and if the literature were really true literature, is it in such great demand? Have we not periodicals like *Superfluous Bilge*, and *Spicy Snapshots*, and *Smart Society*?

* *

One might be excited if one were a novelist popular on both sides of the ocean, though several most popular novelists have preserved a golden silence, in company with almost all our historians, poets (who could poll a heavy vote), scholars, and writers on primitive culture. Theologians hold their peace absolutely; also Assyriologists, biographers, writers on etiquette, cricketers, archaeologists, economists, and physicists. So the respondents are *not* 'fairly representative of the whole body of authors' in Great Britain and Ireland. Not one of them—mark this! (unless it be Lord Avebury, about whom I am not certain)—belongs to the British Academy, and, naturally, the works of members of our Academy *must* be in great request among a highly cultured people like the citizens of the great Republic. Yet they are not complaining. Only the novelists, and not all of them, lift up their voices, and even of those who speak many do not really seem to care one single *Hardhead*, which I mention as a coin despised even by the Scottish people in 1559. I cannot put it lower than that! 'By my halidome' (as Horace Walpole says), methinks that America can now grow her own novels, her philosophies, histories, and biographies of her eminent men. She no more needs ours than we covet those of sunny Greece.

* *

This reminds me to hope that no harm will befall that humorous Russian novelist M. Maxime Gorky. I have been requested, in a telegram from a newspaper, to sign a protest against this gentleman's execution. But I was not informed in what manner he had offended his country's laws, and, even if he has offended, what have we to do with the purely domestic justice of a foreign State? Would Poles or Finns protest if our laws condemned, say,

Mr. Hornung to the axe and the block, and would they ask others to protest who know nothing about the whole affair ?

* * *

Does anyone want to see a German Biblical critic brought to his bearings ? If so, let him read *Fantaisies Biblico-Mythologiques*, by Monsieur E. Cosquin, the great French folklorist. As he publishes in *La Revue Biblique Internationale*, January 1905 (Lecoffre, Paris), it is possible that a brief account of his amusing essay may suffice the British amateur. M. Cosquin starts from Professor Winckler's *History of Israel*, volume ii. (1900). The work was lately applauded, as regards the point at issue, by an eminent English divine in one of the magazines. It may be an excellent book, but Professor Winckler is quoted as saying that 'the chart of the starry heavens is the best guide across the entangled paths of (Hebrew) legends.' This is the discovery of M. Stucken ; the stories in Genesis are stellar myths, applied to human beings. The origin of the stories of the patriarchs is stellar mythology. This is a mere revival of what we thought an obsolete fancy : stellar mythology, cloud mythology, solar mythology ! However, according to M. Stucken, 'all the myths in the world may be traced to the myth of Creation ; the separation of the first parents, Heaven and Earth.' Of course there are plenty of myths of the separation of Heaven and Earth, but only Mr. Casaubon will believe that any one fable is 'the key to all mythologies.'

* * *

However, M. Stucken starts from a Japanese legend with eleven 'motives.'

1. The first parents give birth to all sorts of things, last to the God of Fire, who burns his mother. His father cuts him into collops. This motive is enough, at present. It yields, we are told, the original shape of the story of Hagar and Ishmael. But Ishmael was not cut into collops by Abraham ; on the contrary, he became the ancestor of the Ishmaelites ! M. Stucken proves his point thus : the story of Ishmael is a 'double' of the story of Isaac. But Isaac was not chopped up by Abraham ; he became the father of Jacob. That does not matter. Abraham once meant to sacrifice Isaac. He was 'prevailed upon to stop,' but, in the original form of the story (which no mortal has ever seen) he *must* have cut Isaac up, and Isaac must have come to life again, and Isaac is the same as Ishmael, and Ishmael is the same as the Japanese Fire

God, who *was* cut up by his angry father! For his mother, in Japanese, ran away from her husband, as Ishmael's mother, Hagar, was turned adrift by Sarah.

* *

To this amazing argument M. Cosquin replies by denying the major premiss. The Japanese story (translated by Mr. B. H. Chamberlain) does *not* say that the Japanese goddess ran away from her husband. Her husband did *not* chop up her baby till after she had died in her bed! Her husband then went down to Hades to look for her, and found that, like Persephone in Greece, she had tasted the food of the dead, worse luck, and could 'never come back no more.' M. Stucken, says M. Cosquin, has left all that out, in his anxiety to get at Hagar and Ishmael, and has put in a fancy version, not to be found in our Japanese author! How he gets at Hagar and Ishmael we have seen.

* *

Again, Moses took off Aaron's priestly robes, before his death, and put them on his son. The Japanese god who went into Hades also took off 'his august trousers': the same story, you see! The two stories are identical! M. Cosquin decides that the method of M. Stucken 'lacks common sense,' and science is organised common sense. But M. Stucken publishes in a series directed by Professor Winckler, and Professor Winckler is a Higher Critic. The whole affair is a relapse on the method of Jacob Bryant, who found the Key of Mythologies in Noah's Ark. Students of mythology thought that this kind of thing was exploded, but no, it has got into Biblical criticism; it has got into German books, and our native learned drink it greedily. The entire system, as described by M. Cosquin, of conducting an argument by omitting the actual facts, by inventing the original of a story, and then taking for granted that the invention correctly represents the real state of the case; the seizing on an essential resemblance between a god who takes off his trousers because they are polluted by the under world, and a man who puts the robes of a dying priest on his living successor—the whole affair, in short, is a relapse into the fancies of a school long obsolete in England. Retired colonels may, and do, occupy their leisure in devising systems like this; so do American ladies. But if British Higher Critics are capable of absorbing such ideas, we must view them with pity. Twenty years ago I found out something in archæology. Not a British savant alluded to it till

it was found out again by a Danish savant who knew his business, and then the facts were welcomed.

* * *

An article on 'The Renaissance of Sycophantism,' in *Blackwood's Magazine* for February, astonishes the infrequent reader of the books of the day. The subject is a volume which I never saw, *Theodore Watts-Dunton, Poet, Novelist, Critic*, by James Douglas.¹ Books about living men and women are adventures of dubious propriety. In a few short years the most distinguished and interesting of our contemporaries will be with rich Tullus and Ancus, insensible alike to the mud and the perfumes which biographers may throw. I have heard of ghosts who came back to say that they owed somebody three-and-fourpence, but never of a ghost of a poet, novelist, and critic who appeared to say anything about his biography or his biographer. Yet a good deal may be said !

* * *

Conceive, on the other hand, the emotions of a living novelist, critic, and poet who reads, in Mr. Douglas's 'fat volume' that when he left people in a room 'some expected to see him much darker than they found him to be, some' (and what good memories for trifles *they* must possess !) 'recalled the fact that Miss Corkran . . . described his dark-brown eyes as green, through a printer's error, no doubt.' What an odd *coquille* ! No critic, novelist, and poet, surely, can like to read this tattle about himself. He must blush to find it fame. What does it matter whether people 'see him darker' or not so dark, a Moor or an Albino, whether his *beaux yeux* are violet, amber, golden, or 'the greyest of things blue, the bluest of things grey' ? Not less, but more annoying it must be to a novelist, critic, and poet to be credited with 'a perpetual coruscation of the cosmic spirit,' whatever the cosmic spirit may be. The flattery would be pitched too high if applied to the aurora borealis, or the zodiacal light, or radium in its wildest dreams. The unlucky critic, novelist, and poet is next credited with 'the new cosmic humour.' The New Humour is an old story, but the new cosmic humour is very new indeed ; it must be excellent if it is preferable to the old humour, confined hitherto, as far as we are aware, to this little planet of Shakespeare and Fielding. Perhaps the jokes of the new cosmic humour can only be seen

¹ Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1904.

through a telescope? It appears that there also exist, as well as earthly and unearthly humour, humours 'relative' and humours 'absolute'—

'In all the realms of nonsense absolute.'

* * *

Only the absolute, one surmises, can understand humour that is not relative to something or other; though, of course, there exists humour that is so far absolute as to be absolutely bad. One needs to see specimens before one can be sure that one knows whether this humorous passage is 'cosmic,' or merely 'absolute'; and whether that is 'terrene,' or simply 'relative.' In future, when one reads Molière or Shakespeare, Fielding or Swift, one will be haunted by the doubt, 'Is this humour the right cosmic?' But, after all, it cannot be, for your cosmic humour is 'new,' and *that* is the humour of it. This reflection is full of consolation; we know where to go for the old humour, and can shun the new cosmic humour as if it were a patent new Temperance beverage, or that 'Regular Stunner' which a temperate amateur would prefer to avoid.

* * *

The following advertisement, which has been sent to me, is, perhaps, of the cosmic variety of humour; at all events, it is 'new' enough, and the reference to 'The Chance of the Geologic Period' bears a moderately cosmic complexion:

'THE CHANCE OF THE YEAR!

'THE CHANCE OF THE CENTURY!!

'THE CHANCE OF THE GEOLOGIC PERIOD!!!

'EVERYONE into whose hands this pamphlet may come is sure to know somebody ambitious to make a name in Literature. Here is his opportunity. BEGINNERS with BRAINS have a better chance than professional critics who are perhaps palsied by prejudice.'

* * *

The chance is this. The S.P.R.T. or Society for Propagating Religious Truth, offers 100*l.* for the best essay on the works of Aleister Crowley. I never heard of Mr. Crowley; but he is the author of *Jezebel* (21*s.*), *Carmen Saeculare* (hitherto attributed to Flaccus), *Ahab*, *Alice*, *The Soul of Osiris*, and many, many other works. Competitors must purchase these, which are being reprinted

in a cheap form. 'Should two essays appear of supreme and equal merit'—say with 'a perpetual coruscation of the cosmic spirit,' as Mr. Douglas writes—then the Society will raise the pool to 150*l.*, and the winners will divide that princely sum. But first they must read the works of Mr. Aleister Crowley, so I do not mean to enter: I do not feel absolute enough. If any reader of these lines wants to enter, let him communicate with The Secretary, S.P.R.T., Bole-skine, Foyers, Inverness. Being, in a way, 'a professional,' I am 'perhaps palsied by prejudice.'

* * *

How does it work out as a commercial speculation? Say that I have written seventy works, and offer a prize of 100*l.* for the best essay on them. Let us put the price at five shillings a volume. Competitors must each pay me three hundred and fifty shillings. That makes about 17*l.*, and some odd shillings; I am no mathematician, but it is thereabouts. Now, say that only five hundred persons are 'ambitious to make a name in literature.' Five hundred times 17*l.* is 8500*l.*, out of which I shall refund, as a prize, say, 150*l.* I net 8350*l.*: not bad. Mr. Crowley has only written nineteen books, not seventy, but there may be thousands of competitors for his prize; if so, whether Religious Truth is advanced or not, the pecuniary results will be gratifying. I expect to see this plan freely adopted by modern authors with a genius for advertisement. That sort of genius, at least, is common, and is rather ill-advised. Men of soaring powers let themselves be photographed with their favourite dogs, cats, mongooses, books, pictures, statues, old hats, to illustrate articles about the shapes of their noses, the colour of their flashing peepers, their too obvious failure to use Tatcho, their grandmothers, their conversation, their royalties, their translators, their lady admirers, their choice of a sepulchre, their taste in teas or in cigarettes, their holdiay adventures, their old slippers, and all the rest of it. I do not even believe that it is good business as advertisement. Thousands of people would swallow this information—they would read it if it were about Jones or X.—who will never open the pages of the author that is tattled about. Happily a few writers, and these the best, have not made friends with this Mammon of journalistic unrighteousness.

* * *

The writers of fictitious 'memoirs' are wicked men. Somebody called, or calling himself, Vandam or Van Damme, or a name

of that kind, was guilty, many years ago, of a book about Parisian characters in the end of the reign of Louis Philippe, and in the late Empire. He spoke of a mysterious Major Fraser, who affected to remember persons of remote historic times, and had plenty of money, but no known antecedents, a kind of Parisian Melchizedek. Much more in jest than earnest, I alluded to this Major Fraser as an *avatar* of the famous charlatan of the eighteenth century, Saint-Germain. The book in which this remark occurs, *Historical Mysteries*, was reviewed by M. Th. de Wyzewa in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, and the critic scouted Mr. Van D——'s legend of Major Fraser. He was well inspired. A Polish gentleman, who had read the review by M. de Wyzewa, very kindly sends me information about the Major. There was no mystery about that gallant officer, a member of the House of Fraser of Saltoun, with sixteen authentic quarterings, and everything handsome about him. He lived, when young, a somewhat adventurous life abroad, taking part in the civil wars of Spain. He was *not* 'the illegitimate son of some exalted person,' royal or otherwise, at the Spanish Court. He was known, at the French Jockey Club, to the father of my informant, and had no more to do with Saint-Germain than with Rob Roy Macgregor, or the Chevalier Strong. I never did believe in the myth of Mr. Van D——, but I thought it agreeably picturesque. The author did not aim at being a scientific historian—quite the reverse.

* * *

A new and authentic anecdote of Queen Mary is always welcome, and Mr. Murray Rose quotes one in the *Scottish Historical Review*. Randolph, the English resident at Edinburgh, writes that he wishes all cardinals were 'like him who gave up the ghost with a whin-yard' (dagger) 'in his heart in the Castle of St. Andrews.' The idea puts him 'in merrie pynne,' as he says, and he tells his anecdote. When Queen Mary was a little girl of three, or thereabouts, in Scotland, Cardinal Beaton entered the room where she was, apparently in his red robes. The royal child cried: 'Kill Redeaton, kill Redeaton! He will take me away.' Redeaton, says Randolph, is the same sort of being as Robin Goodfellow.

* * *

The Queen really meant the Red Etin, a monster in an old Scottish nursery tale, which the curious will find in *The Blue Fairy*

Book (page 385). The rhyme about him, which the little Queen would know, runs thus :

The Red Etin of Ireland,
 He lived in Ballygan,
 He stole King Malcolm's daughter,
 The King of fair Scotland ;
 He beats her, he binds her,
 He lays on her a band,
 And every day he dings her
 With a bright silver wand.

Being the daughter of 'the King of fair Scotland,' the little Queen had every reason to suppose that the Red Etin, the cardinal, had come specially to take her away. He must have been killed not many months later. The subject would make a pretty picture in the old-fashioned *genre* of historical anecdote.

* * *

'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings'—the pretty baby Queen spoke the truth. The Red Etin, or his party, did 'take her away,' away to France, and a French marriage and a creed which was no longer that of her people, to a destiny worse than that of 'King Malcolm's daughter' in the song and the story. Randolph noticed that fulfilment of prophecy before Mary returned to Scotland, and set her foot on that path where her sorrows were to be.

ANDREW LANG.

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